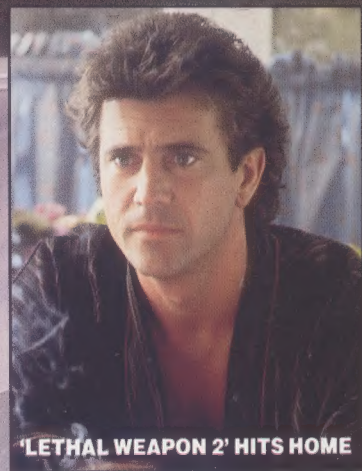


► Critics' Poll: The Year's Top Tapes & Discs ◀

Video Review

MARCH 1990

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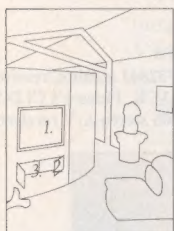
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Change Springs Eternal

March heralds spring and its promise of renewal. Here at *Video Review*, we're renewing our 10th Anniversary promise to publish the most enjoyable magazine we can. Renewal sometimes involves change, so you will find that this issue sets off in the direction of video's next decade.

We've reorganized our Reviews section in the belief you will find it easier to use. For tapes, you'll notice there's one section for rental titles and another for "collectibles." That's our name for those new and classic programs

whose pricing, often less than a hardcover book, now makes it feasible to create a home video library.

Laser discs now have their own section, too—and not just because disc releases are more frequent. More important, we feel that discs require specialized reviewing, what with the letterboxing, supplementary programming and other technical features that differentiate this format from tape.

It's been a long haul for the disc format. You can review its history in this month's Rewind feature. In the forward-looking mode, we've got a Special Report on HDTV works

in progress. I imagine existing movies will be rescanned for HDTV someday, and a wide vista is what we'll need for the westerns celebrated in Jeffrey Lyons' Critic's Choice this month. Perhaps we'll enjoy them in media rooms like the ones featured in this issue. Satellites will download the programming to some homes—and we've got the lowdown on dish watching, too.

Spring means it's ViRA time, and VR critics have posted their ballots for 1989's top tapes and discs. How do our nominations compare with yours? Please write—we'd like to know.

Besides our Reviews section, something else has changed here. Jim Meigs has relayed the baton to me as editorial pointman for VR. 'Til next time. . .



STEPHEN A. BOOTH,
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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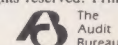
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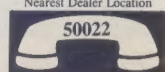
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6 VIDEO REVIEW



Dirty Looks

You've finally given voice to the frustration we movie buffs must endure with the home Video Horror Story known as the VHS format ("Special Report: Video's Dirty

ages and streaking due to high-speed duplication, has become all too familiar.

Mitchell Gallob
New York, NY

Lost in Translation

On the cover of your January 1990 issue, the JVC "concept C" monitor pictured has the spelling "moniter" where the plug goes in. Gotcha, JVC!

Cecil Rhoades
Allendale, MI

•The concept C featured on the January cover was a Japanese prototype; JVC assures us that the spelling error will be corrected on production models. —Ed.

Laser Wait

I would like to encourage you to place more emphasis on the laser format. I have had a laser player for over five years now and love the format. My biggest complaint is the delayed release of most movies on disc, most notably *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *Batman*. I think the powers that decide these things need to be prodded to



Secret," Jan. '90 VR), but what good will your complaint do? Grainy VHS dubs are here to stay. The same ill-informed mass market which fell for the extra slowest-speed recording time offered by VHS will continue to purchase substandard tapes...because they're cheap. Many viewers don't even bother to tune in the TV set properly, so why should a lousy dub concern them?

J. Adam Koehler
Milwaukee, WI

I was especially interested in Ron Goldberg's article, "Video's Dirty Secret." I think there is no question that most VCR owners are not interested in quality. (Why else would VHS have become the most popular format?) Fortunately, there are enough of us Betaphiles to keep the market alive. I have heard people say, "If it ain't on Beta, it isn't worth having." I guess that this is more true now than ever before.

Michael Secour
San Francisco, CA

Your piece on the poor quality of pre-recorded LP video was long overdue. Now when can we expect one on the poor quality of prerecorded SP video?

Should I buy a budget video, I'd expect the quality to be compromised. But shelling out anywhere from \$20 to \$90 for a name-brand cassette, only to have to sit through a barrage of glitches, flashes, rippling im-



adjust their thinking. They perpetuate the image of greed by ignoring a growing public segment that wants quality in video.

Richard DiSanto
Denver, CO

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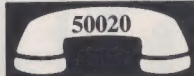
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Threads

About three years ago I saw a very disturbing and realistic movie concerning a nuclear holocaust. I have not seen it since, but I haven't forgotten its chilling visual effects or its unusual attention to the



Threads of humanity: a survivor glares.

details and ramifications of radioactive fallout. Its title was *Threads* and I believe it's British. I must have this video.

James Cowan
Fairfield, CA

Threads is available on VHS and Beta cassettes, for \$69.95, from New World Video. Call New World's Customer Service Department at (213) 444-8100 for more information. The 1985 movie is also available for rent as well as sale from Facets Multimedia in Chicago, (800) 331-6197. Those interested in nuclear and environmental issues might want to write for the Video Project Catalog, which offers documentaries and educational videotapes on the arms race, the environment and other related topics. Write: the Video Project, 5332 College Ave., Suite 101, Oakland, CA 94618, or call (415) 655-9050.

Jimmy Rogers Redux

Regarding the question in the January "Video Hunter" about the great country musician Jimmie (not Jimmy) Rodgers: It would have been nearly impossible for

him to have starred in any movies in the early 1940s, since he died of tuberculosis in 1933. Could you have Jimmie confused with a Jimmy of the same surname?

George Needham
Lancaster, OH

You do great work and are normally infallible, but in the January issue your answer to a query about Jimmy Rogers was in error. The Rodgers reader Ed Dees referred to was "the Father of Country Music"; he and the Carter family started it in 1927. He only made one 10-minute short, entitled *The Singing Brakeman*, and he was called "The Blue Yodeler." The Jimmy Rogers you referred to was the son of Will Rogers and not only could he not sing, he could not act either.

Lee B. Philmon
Jonesboro, GA

Kent State

I remember seeing the movie *Kent State* on TV while I was a freshman at Kent State. It was sort of a docudrama about the events leading to the 1970 shooting of Kent State students by the National Guard. Is it available on video?

Jim Crane
Columbus, OH

Kent State, a 1981 TV movie featuring Ellen Barkin, was released on video (VHS and Beta) by MCA in 1987. MCA tells us it must be ordered through a retailer (the movie's catalog number is 80484). If you have trouble finding the \$39.95 tape, call MCA Distribution Corp. at (212) 841-8056.

Fay Wray

I am looking for two movies that Fay Wray starred in. One is 1928's *The Wedding March* directed by, and starring, Erich von Stroheim. The other movie, *Doctor X*, was made in 1932. If they are available, where can I get them?

Thomas Muttea
Whiting, IN

The Wedding March is available from Paramount Home Video. You can order it (on VHS only) for \$29.95 from Blackhawk Films/Video; to place a credit-card order, call (800) 826-2295. For more info or a catalog write: The Blackhawk Catalog, 5559 Triumph St., Commerce, CA 90040-1688.

Doctor X, from MGM/UA Home Video, is available on VHS or Beta from Facets Multimedia. It sells for \$59.95, but you can also rent it by mail. Call Facets at (800) 331-6197, or write: 1517 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, IL 60614, for more info.

Rock Video

For courses I teach, I'd like to use several old rock video pieces, such as those by Billy Ocean, Pat Benatar and the Motels. How do I go about locating such old-timers?

Charles Blinderman
Professor of English
Clark University
Worcester, MA

So much for readin' and writin' and 'rithmetic. Many of the music videos made available to the public are on multi-artist compilations, video "albums," concert programs or "best of" anthologies. There is a mail-order company called Crystal Mountain Music Video which lists music videos in many categories for sale or rent-by-mail. Its current catalog includes Pat Benatar's *Hit Videos* (1984, \$19.95), *In Concert* (1983, \$29.95) and *The Video Music Collection* (1987, \$19.98). Crystal Mountain also carries *The Motels* (1984, \$9.95) and *Shock* (1986, \$16.95). Call (800) 433-8574, or send \$5 to P.O. Box 1299, Glenwood Springs, CO 81602, for its catalog, the Music Video Index. A mail-order outfit called J. Rochet & Associates, which puts out a catalog called the Music Video Collector, Vol. II, offers two Billy Ocean titles: *In London* (1986, \$19.95) and *Tear Down These*

Benatar belts one out.



As a service to our readers, Video Review will help track down hard-to-find tapes or discs. Send requests to Video Review's Video Hunter, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010. VR reserves the right to edit and condense selections for publication. Sorry, no personal replies.

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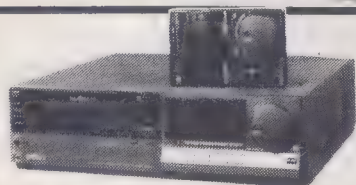
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Hits (1988, \$27.95). For a catalog write: J. Rochet & Associates, Box 127, 114-41 Queens Blvd., Forest Hills, NY 11375.

The Flim-Flam Man

I am trying to locate on video *Damn Yankees*, with Ray Walston and Tab Hunter, and *The Flim-Flam Man*, with George C. Scott.

Nic Nichols
St. Peters, MO

1958's *Damn Yankees* is out on video from Warner Home Video from \$59.95 (VHS or Beta). For help locating a retailer, call Commtron, (800) 247-8032, or Ingram Video, (612) 887-9500. 1967's *The Flim-Flam Man*, about a con man whose partner falls for the daughter of their victim, is available on VHS and Beta from Playhouse Video, a division of CBS/Fox, for \$59.98. Try to order it through your local video store, or call Sound Distributors in Missouri at (314) 426-2388 to locate a retailer near you that can procure it.

King of Kings

I am a big fan of the late Jeffrey Hunter. Can you tell me if his Biblical epic, *King of Kings*, is available on video? Also, are any of his other movies out on videocassette?

Erin Marshall
Brigham City, UT

1961's *King of Kings*, the story of the life of Jesus Christ, is an MGM/UA video release, and available by mail from Critic's Choice Video (on VHS only) for \$29.95 plus shipping. Critic's Choice also has *The Searchers*, a John Wayne western in which Hunter has a part, for \$19.98. Call (800) 367-7765, or send \$2 for a catalog to Critic's Choice Video, P.O. Box 549, Elk Grove, IL 60009. There are a few other Hunter movies available on videocassette, including 1960's *Hell to Eternity*, a WWII drama, distributed by Key Video for \$59.98, and *Seven Cities of Gold*, a 1955 western, from Playhouse Video for \$19.98. You can call the CBS/Fox Sales Department at (312) 934-0800, to locate a distributor near you.

Jamaican Movies

I am a long-time subscriber and reader of VR but I have not yet seen anything about movies made by Jamaicans, centering on Jamaican themes or starring Jamaicans. Two in mind are *Bongo Man* and *The Harder They Come*, starring Jimmy Cliff. Can a list be obtained somewhere?

Christopher Cooper
APO, NY



Reggae star Cliff points the way to Paradise.

We don't know of one comprehensive Jamaican video list or catalog. But there are at least a few Jamaican movies on video. *Bongo Man* is available on VHS or Beta for \$59.95 from MPI Home Video. Write to the company at 15825 Rob Roy Dr., Oak Forest, IL 60452, or call (312) 687-7881, to find out how you can receive a copy. The legendary *The Harder They Come* is available from HBO Home Video for \$19.95. It can be ordered through your local retailer or call HBO at (800) 767-2500. Reggae star Cliff also appears in *Club Paradise*, a comedy with Robin Williams and Peter O'Toole that is on video from Warner—at \$19.98 for the tape and \$29.98 for the laser disc. If you can't order it through your retailer, you can buy or rent it from Rare Bird Video, 482 Broome St., New York, NY 10013, (212) 334-8150. The Crystal Mountain Music Video Index lists several music videos from Jimmy Cliff, Bob Marley, Black Uhuru and others. It also offers the documentary *Roots, Rock, Reggae* (\$19.99); the concert video, *Mutabaruka* (\$29.95) and the Jamaican movies *Countryman* (\$59.95) and *Mama Florence and Papa Cock* (\$49.95). Titles from Crystal Mountain can be bought or rented. Write Crystal Mountain Music Video, P.O. Box 1299, Glenwood Springs, CO 81602, or call (800) 433-8574 or (303) 963-3680, for a catalog.

Sapphire

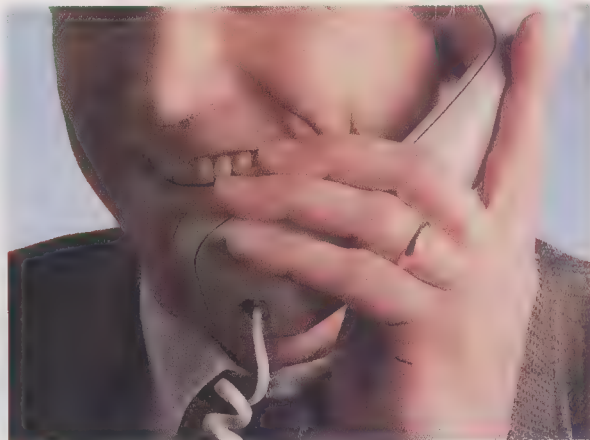
I am looking for a British movie called *Sapphire*. I remember it being about a mysterious murder on the outskirts of London. I also remember it being a great movie with exceptional acting. Please fill in the blanks.

Daulton Anderson
Brooklyn, NY

Sapphire, a 1959 whodunit about two detectives trying to solve the murder of a mysterious young black woman who had been passing for white, was directed by Basil Deardon and starred Nigel Patrick and Yvonne Mitchell. It was released on video by Independent United Distributors, who have since discontinued it in order to focus their inventory on wrestling tapes, according to a spokesperson. Older, well-stocked rental outlets may still carry it, however.

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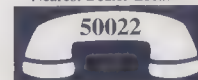
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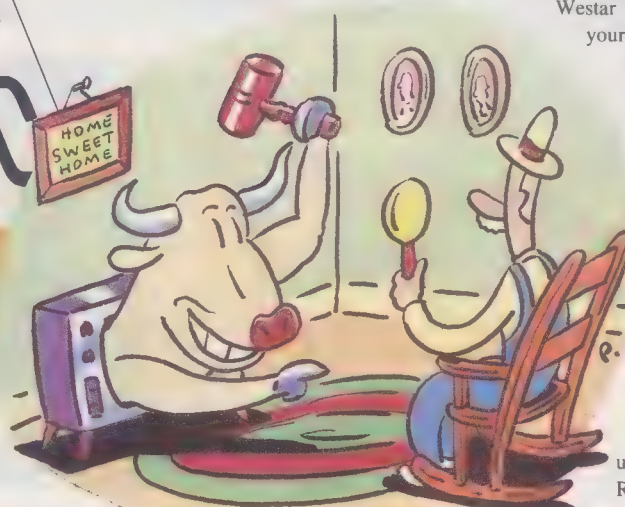
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FREEZE FRAME



THE COWS COME HOME

Are you tired of seeing the same old product mix on the Home Shopping Network? Are you looking for something more than the same old Cubic Zirconia jewelry and ballerina figurines? Maybe you've said to yourself, "Boy, I wish I could buy a herd of cattle instead of this tired merchandise!" Well, if you aim your satellite dish at the Westar V bird one of these days, your prayers may be answered.

Last November, the Central Livestock Association of South St. Paul, Minnesota, premiered a series of cattle auctions telecast via satellite from a livestock yard near Fargo, North Dakota. Starting at 9 a.m. Central Time, the CLA auctioned off more than 2,500 head of Angus, Hereford and other breeds of cattle to farmers looking to fatten up the beasts for slaughter. Response to the two auctions conducted by the CLA last year were good: Farmers watching the livestock on TV bid from as far away as Louisiana. Though the long-distance satellite auctions are a convenience and a novelty to cattle buyers, they're not perfect as far as we're concerned: The CLA charges plenty for freight, and they don't take American Express.



QUOTE/UNQUOTE

"I wish I had a nickel for every phone call [we've gotten] for *Faces of Death* since we pulled it off the market."



We assume that MPI Home Video CEO Waheed Ali means that he's gotten a lot of phone calls for this program and that had each one reached him accompanied by a

nickel, he would be a rich man. He could also mean that he's a nickel collector and could perhaps find a rare and sought-after coin among his many five-cent pieces. Whatever.

For those who don't remember, *Faces of Death* was MPI's most notorious release, a suffused-with-charm compilation of "documentary" footage of lots of things buying the farm. Ali told industry newsletter *Video Week* that MPI took it off the market in 1986 because "it wasn't the kind of programming MPI wanted to establish itself with." Still, he wistfully wishes for phone-request/nickel-receipt parity,

although we're not sure why. True, if he got one phone call requesting *Faces of Death* every minute of every day between 1986 and 1990 and received a nickel for each

of these, he'd gross a good \$10,512,000. But that's an excessive number of calls; a better estimate would be five *Faces* requests a day, which would yield Ali a mere \$36,500, hardly enough, we assume, to cover production costs on a couple of issues of MPI's terrific *Impact Video Magazine* (although you never know). In any case, the whole point is moot, since the MPI-distributed Gorgon label is now rereleasing *Faces of Death*, which will no doubt respark the controversy the title stirred up when it originally surfaced. On the other hand, Ali will get a well-deserved break from answering the phone.

FEEBLE-MINDED

The venerable Japanese tradition of giving things really confounding English names continues, and *Dempa Digest*, the consumer electronics newsletter from the Land of the Rising Sun, is the tradition's unwitting chronicler. Just as the *Digest* announced camcorders with "fuzzy logic," it now brings us news of Toshiba's new cellular telephone. Said phone's features sound fairly nifty; it's got an automatic answering function and lets the user play back messages via satellite. But all these features don't compensate for the fact that, according to *Dempa*, the model is a "feeble-format" phone. Pretty weak, no?

What Are You Watching?

**PAUL
McCartNEY**

"I'm like people," explains ex-Wing Paul McCartney. "If something's a hit, I usually like it." Though his current global concert tour is cutting into his telly time, Paulie has had a few VCRs packed for unwinding with his wife, keyboardist/singer/composer/photographer/mum Linda. Their favorite tapes? "Our tastes are so varied. We like a little of everything," McCartney says, "Tracey Ullman, Fred and Ginger, Richard Lester, music videos—rock 'n' roll, of course, and rap." What about the movies McCartney made with his first band? "[Our] kids like *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, to see what it was like. They missed it the first time. I'll watch a little—there's great stuff there. But I'd rather carry on, you know."



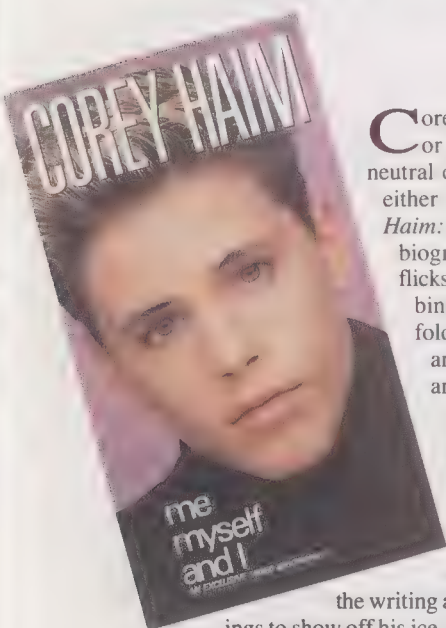
THE COREY THING

Corey Haim—sensitive, misunderstood teen idol or hateful little twerp? We prefer to remain neutral on the issue, but those who want to debate either side won't be able to do so without *Corey Haim: Me, Myself, and I* (Twin Tower), a "video biography" of the beloved star of such awesome flicks as *The Lost Boys* and *License to Drive*. Combining techniques from *Playboy* video centerfolds (i.e. constant alternation between B&W and color footage) and Godard movies (there are many shots of the crew setting up), this portrait of the 17-year-old "Haimster" contains many Coreyesque observations on heavy topics like the public presentation of the self ("you are what you wear"), the secret behind a great kiss ("it basically comes down to the word... love") and where he wants his career to go ("I'm moving towards

the writing and directing thing"). He interrupts his mus-

ings to show off his ice-skating, driving and inflatable-float lounging abilities, occasionally affecting a homeboy patois that may make you want to drive him around South LA to see how the Crips and the Bloods take to his "rap" style.

The adolescent icon who, at the age of 16, went on *The Arsenio Hall Show* to announce that he had been off cocaine for weeks (!) and that he intended to "stay clean" for *himself* (as opposed to "for the Gipper" or "for the hell of it") makes no explicit reference on the tape to what pal Arsenio often refers to as "the drug thing." He does announce to his concerned fans that he's feeling "on the ball" and goes on to advise his peers not to "get messed up." Whether he means getting messed up on controlled substances or getting messed up in a car crash—or for that matter, getting your sensibilities messed up by watching this tape—is never made clear.



SHAKE AND SELL

Keep you to great natural disasters can offer you a list about the disaster of an era. The 1935 Union earthquake, for example, prompted Voltaire's *Candide* and Pope's *An Essay on Man*, whereas last fall's tremors in San Francisco yielded "I Survived the 1989 Quake" T-shirts. The disaster also created a window for KCEI, Southern California's public television station. Its quick-preparedness videocassette, catchily titled *Surviving the Big One*, has

enjoyed quite a surge in sales since the shake-up in the City by the Bay.

To wit: 8,000 copies of the tape have been sold since the quake, the accounts for 50% of total sales at posttime.

A KCEI vice president noted that "the approaching Christmas season made the program an ideal gift item." We're certain that anyone who popped into his or her stocking Christmas morning and saw someone has marked *Surviving the Big One* certainly felt a swift cold blast of holiday cheer. Getting the tape during another part of the year, you may want to be as loving as you can be, but being as the program is a little better for its sale.

For more information, KCEI owners living in areas of moderate quake might find it handy. The tape is \$19.95 and can be ordered directly by dialing (800) 278-KCEI.

Illustration: Marcia Sieger

HIT LIST

LAST MONTH	TOP TAPES	THIS MONTH	TOP DISCS	LAST MONTH
—	INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE Paramount—\$24.95	1	WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT Touchstone CLV—\$29.99; CAV—\$39.99	—
—	TURNER AND HOOD Touchstone—\$89.95	2	BAMBI Walt Disney CLV—\$29.99; CAV—\$39.99	—
1	BATMAN Warner—\$24.98	3	GHOSTBUSTERS II RCA/Columbia LV—\$24.95	—
2	GHOSTBUSTERS II RCA/Columbia—\$89.95	4	WHEN HARRY MET SALLY . . . Nelson LV—\$24.95	—
3	WHEN HARRY MET SALLY . . . Nelson—\$89.98	5	GONE WITH THE WIND MGM/UA LV—\$49.95	1
4	WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT Touchstone—\$19.99	6	THE WIZARD OF OZ MGM/UA LV—\$24.98	2
5	STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER Paramount—no list price	7	SCROOGED Paramount LV—\$24.95	4
7	SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL RCA/Columbia—\$89.95	8	ROAD HOUSE MGM/UA LV—\$24.95	—
—	LICENCE TO KILL CBS/Fox—\$89.98	9	K-9 MCA LV—\$34.98	—
—	UNCLE BUCK MCA—\$89.95	10	LEVIATHAN MGM/UA LV—\$24.95	—

"Hit List" is based on a nationwide survey of leading video software specialty stores, chains, mass merchandisers and wholesalers. The list includes titles taken from retailers' current top tape and disc lists as well as distributors' prerelease sales printouts.



Freeze That Frame

From our readers: A guide to the movies' most memorable goofs, gaffes and other "remote" secrets.

Maybe It's a Chuck Wagon: "A glitch appears in the famous opening scene of George Stevens' classic, *Shane*," writes Harold Schechter of Chappaqua, New York. "Brandon de Wilde is outside the family cabin stalking deer, when he suddenly spots Alan Ladd approaching from the mountains. If you look very closely at the landscape behind Ladd, you can make out a white object in the distance—apparently a truck or some other large vehicle (perhaps an RV)—driving across the scenery from the left of the screen to the right."

Gymnastic Gaffe: Michael Phillips of Scottsdale, Arizona,

writes: "In *The Running Man* when Arnold Schwarzenegger is running toward Erland van Lidth as Dynamo, Lidth smashes his lightning ball in front of him, an explosion occurs and Arnold gets thrown 15 feet forward.



More than meets the eye: *The Running Man*, *Blade Runner*.

Great stunt! But, look at the lower left of the freeze-frame: Is that a jumping board that catapults Arnold forward?"

Sleight of Head: Several readers pointed out some tricky military luggage in *Stripes*.

Bruce Anderbery of Axtell, Nebraska, sets the scene: "Harold Ramis is in his underwear sitting on Bill Murray, trying to convince him not to go AWOL." Adds John Culver of Sugar Land, Texas: "Notice

how Murray's duffel bag is under his head, then at his feet, then under his head again as the camera angle changes."

Me and My Shadow: Bo Viger of Ft. Collins, Colorado, advises VR readers to

watch *Blade Runner* "near the end when Harrison Ford is stalking through the genetic engineer's apartment while an eerie light comes from behind the camera. As the camera pans Ford's movements, on the wall

behind him you can easily pick up both Ford's and the cameraman's shadows! Definitely only noticeable in slow-motion for most folks, though I caught it in real time on my third viewing."

Maternal Mishap: It would seem that live action would present more opportunity for slip ups than animated movies, but perhaps not. A minor mistake or the omission of a single drawing in a sequence can lead to some surprising goofs. Such is the case in Walt Disney's *Bambi*. Quite a few observant fans, including the five- and seven-year-old sons of Jim Chastek of Lomita, California, noticed a disappearing baby raccoon toward the end of the movie. "After the fire in the forest," writes Chastek, "there is a scene where a mother raccoon is gently licking her babies. After a couple of licks, the babies suddenly pop out of the frame. The mother continues to lick, but the babies aren't there."

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DANGEROUS LIAISONS
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PINK FLOYD—DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER	4627052	A CRY IN THE DARK	6383042	EVERYBODY'S ALL AMERICAN	6380072	COCOON II	3710052
ARSENIC AND OLD LACE	0735442	CHANCES ARE	5932022	HEARTBREAK HOTEL	5497092	THE PRINCIPAL	5908022
CAMELOT	6027482					HOLLYWOOD'S GREATEST/MUSICALS THE MUSIC MAN 6147012 MY FAIR LADY 3507512 SINGIN' IN THE RAIN 2554552 WEST SIDE STORY 0505912 AMADEUS 6529172 ANNIE 1516132 LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (RESTORED) 5919092 THE TEN COMMANDMENTS 2026552 DR. ZHIVAGO 0026182 THE GODFATHER 0008512 GANDHI 1533042	
PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES	4394062						
BEVERLY HILLS COP II	4319082	THE WIZARD OF OZ (ANNIV. ED.)	2941082	THE MALTESE FALCON	0508072		
ADVENTURES IN BABYSITTING	5486022	FLETCH LIVES	5823042	TAP	5920062		
AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN	2021352	PUNCHLINE	1994062	CROSSING DELANCEY	6371082	SUSPECT	5911072
BEVERLY HILLS COP	2053362	IMAGINE: JOHN LENNON	6368032	THE NAKED GUN	4471022	YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU	5949032
THROW MOMMA FROM THE TRAIN	2351012	DEATH WISH 4: THE CRACKDOWN	3449032	NORTH TO ALASKA	7310262	HAMBURGER HILL	4954082
PLATOON	6500282	TUCKER	4417092	JUMPIN' JACK FLASH	3627072	BILL COSBY, HIMSELF	0935342
SHORT CIRCUIT	3807192	THE STRING	1005292	THE GLENN MILLER STORY	2130412	CAN'T BUY ME LOVE	5485032
SHORT CIRCUIT 2	5906042	OVERBOARD	3657002	FLASHDANCE	2018222	THE RUNNING MAN	4956062
HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS	2219032	THE LOST BOYS	6315072	DIRTY HARRY	6017572	NUTS	6328102
BULL DURHAM	2360002	FUNNY GIRL	1511262	JEWEL OF THE NILE	3571602	THE RIGHT STUFF	6043142
PATTON	0043332	HELLO, DOLLY	0609472	48 HOURS	2022262	D.O.A. (1988)	5489092
CLEOPATRA	0579432	MARRIED TO THE MOB	2361092	SHANE	2073162	THE FLY (1988)	3617332
IRON EAGLE II	7991082	LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS (1986)	6297172	BODY HEAT	6020112	HEARTBREAK RIDGE	6289332
ACCIDENTAL TOURIST	6386012	THE LAST UNICORN	0685022	WALL STREET	3661042	A ROOM WITH A VIEW	3615012
MOONSTRUCK	2716012	THE QUIET MAN	4032122	THE NATURAL	1649132	SPORTS ILLUSTRATED 25TH ANNIV. SWIMSUIT VIDEO	6874022
SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS	2518352	SAY ANYTHING	3720032	CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD	4294152	SANTA CLAUS: THE MOVIE	3387232
THE CARE BEARS MOVIE II	1862132	MAJOR LEAGUE	4478052	THE SHINING	6103292	THE SEARCHERS	6102202
STAR TREK IV—THE VOYAGE HOME	4306112			ARTHUR	6024332	THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW	6819082
ROMANCING THE STONE	0894252			ACTION JACKSON	5191082	JAWS	1000242
COLORS	2355072	AN AMERICAN TAIL	2184042	WITNESS	4114052	TERMS OF ENDEARMENT	6097272
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		DOCTOR DOOLITTLE	0732212	RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI	7908082	HATARI!	4110092
		CHARLOTTE'S WEB	2095282	BRADDOCK: MISSING IN ACTION III	7250022	A CHORUS LINE	3193432
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		ALIEN NATION	3698012				
		COUSINS	4472012				
		STAR TREK III—THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK	2016322				
		TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD	1022282				
		ALIENS	3609252				
		STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE	2035212				
		FULL METAL JACKET	6325052				
		THE TERMINATOR	6528182				
		COCOON	3553882				
		TOOTSIE	1509122				
		GIANT	6080182				
		CLARA'S HEART	6372072				
		THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI	1606302				
		ABOVE THE LAW	6336022				
		THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK	6323072				
		APOCALYPSE NOW	2001132				
		HOLIDAY INN	1035152				
		THE PRINCESS BRIDE	1250052				
		RAMBO III	7975062				
		BIG BUSINESS	5494022				
		OLIVER!	1760242				
		RED HEAT	7987022				
		BLAZING SADDLES	0012482				
		STAND BY ME	1924432				
		THE DEER HUNTER	2124152				
		ALIEN	0002812				
		THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY	7340042				
		BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE	3912012				
		SCROOGED	4484072				
		THREE FUGITIVES	8501072				
		STAKEOUT	5488002				
		CABARET	4001502				
		FROM HERE TO ETERNITY	1917002				
		THE DEAD POOL	6358052				
		GREMLINS	6082242				
		BRIGADOON	2542352				
		THE BIG CHILL	1527692				
		M-A-S-H	0055382				
		A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4: DREAM MASTER	5713072				
		TRUE GRIT	2028532				
		THE GRAPES OF WRATH	0531572				
		BLUE HAWAII	0673302				
		MIDNIGHT RUN	5286042				
		FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF	4273102				
		LA BAMBÀ	1963032				
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		ERNEST GOES TO CAMP	5484042				
		EMPIRE OF THE SUN	6332062				
		THE LONGEST DAY	0577602				
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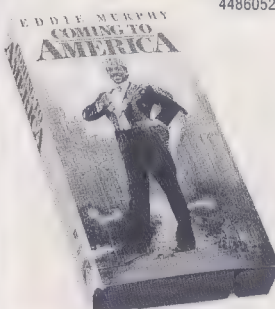
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THE GODFATHER PART II	0018592			OKLAHOMA!	0054392	THE MUSIC MAN	6147012
BLOCKBUSTERS				GREASE	2074312	THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN	0698152
BATMAN	5425042	RAIN MAN	2869062	BLACK WIDOW	3630022	POLICE ACADEMY II	6306162
		BACK TO THE FUTURE	2114172	STAND AND DELIVER	6337012	PURPLE RAIN	6048012
		THE LAST EMPEROR	1974002	ANGEL HEART	7956172	GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?	1819092
		FATAL ATTRACTION	4393072	THE HANDI HILTON	6307072	ROCKY IV	3570462
		GOOD MORNING VIETNAM	5482062	POLICE ACADEMY	6049672	WAR OF THE WORLDS	2094292
		DIE HARD	3676072	AGNES OF GOD	1812222	SUPERMAN IV: THE QUEST FOR PEACE	6311012
		THE COLOR PURPLE	6301032	A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET II	3382022	THE COTTON CLUB	3100292
		DIRTY DANCING	4955152	CASABLANCA	0507572	THE KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN	3187332
		MISSISSIPPI BURNING	2373052	MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER	0788082	THE SICILIAN	4953092
		THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK	0910412	MURPHY'S ROMANCE	1853482	MY LIFE AS A DOG	4391082
		COCKTAIL	5493032	THE SHOOTIST	4109282	MASQUERADE	3666092
				HEIDI	0565072	GARDENS OF STONE	3846042
				SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME	1989072	IRONWEED	4958042
				THE SECRET OF MY SUCCESS	2222082	HOPE AND GLORY	1251042
				DRAGNET	2227032	BACK TO SCHOOL	6524202
				JAWS: THE REVENGE	2230082	YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN	0635452
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				TRADING PLACES	2017232	DEATH WISH 4: THE CRACKDOWN	3449032
				SILKWOOD	3106152	STRIPES	1513242
				BLADE RUNNER	3104332	LESS THAN ZERO	3655022
				REAR WINDOW	2134132	THE HOUSE ON CARROLL STREET	6621062
				VERTIGO	2136032	STEEL DAWN	4951012
				THE JAZZ SINGER (1980)	2069122	BLUE VELVET	5150072
				HALLOWEEN	3250432	FOOTLOOSE	2019132
				ROCKY	0563332	OUT OF AFRICA	2131182
				BURGLAR	6309052		
				LOST HORIZON	1916012		
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SESAME STREET PRESENTS: FOLLOW THAT BIRD	6117232	A PASSAGE TO INDIA	1741362
THE WAY WE WERE	1529262	DR. NO	0554182
POLTERGEIST III	2807012	NORTH BY NORTHWEST	2509362
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THE JOLSON STORY	1849032	EXCALIBUR	6021022
THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS	3652052	BILOXI BLUES	6822032
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PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE	6098342	SHAKEDOWN	6821042
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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND	1510272	A STAR IS BORN (1954)	6105012
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN ANTHOLOGY (1978-1988)	4688012	PRINCE OF DARKNESS	2245012
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P76/P82/N23

NEWSBREAKS

LOW-COST TUBES. HDTV TECH.  VIDGAME PROBE. CES REPORT

F.Y.I.

BATMAN SOARS

BATMAN BECAME THE busiest title in history after renting 9.8 million times over two weeks last fall, according to Video Flash, a company that tracks videocassette rentals. The week ending last December 4 was the biggest week for VCR rentals in history, according to Video Flash.

MOVIES TOP SURVEY

WHEN THEY'RE IN THE house, Americans' favorite form of entertainment is watching a movie on videocassette, according to a survey conducted by *The Wall Street Journal*. The most popular home entertainment device is the color TV; in second place is the VCR.

TURNER BUYS FLICKS

COLUMBIA PICTURES HAS sold 1,000 movies to Turner Broadcasting System for broadcast throughout the decade. The movies headed for SuperStation TBS and Turner Network Television include *Tootsie*, *The Big Chill* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

POLAND GETS CABLE

A US COMPANY WILL START wiring Poland for cable this year, making the country the first in Eastern Europe to have the technology. A basic package, likely to include CNN and ESPN, will cost subscribers about \$8.50 per month.

MGM/UA GOES 8MM

MGM/UA HOME VIDEO HAS reached an agreement with Sony to release new movies and catalog selections in the 8mm format. The only companies previously releasing new titles in 8mm were Warner, Paramount and Nelson.

TAPERS MEASURED

NIELSEN MEDIA RESEARCH, which measures nationwide TV viewing, officially started tracking playback of prerecorded movies on January 4. One test household screened *The Wizard of Oz* 32 times in 10 weeks, according to Nielsen.

MADE IN USA

Cheaper Big TVs Expected

By Robert Gerson

Big-screen TVs may be cheaper in the US this year because a number of manufacturers are increasing their US production of giant picture tubes. The prices on these direct-view sets, measuring 30 inches or more diagonally, may come down as supply builds, competition increases and costs decline because of less reliance on imported tubes.

The latest to join the big-tube ranks is Sony, which says it's investing \$100 million to expand its San Diego plant for a late-1990 start on production of 32-inch tubes. If different manufacturers proceed as scheduled, Sony will be the fourth company to gear up production of large-screen tubes in the US.

The only manufacturer now in full-scale production of the large tubes is Toshiba, which is turn-



Toshiba plans more 32-inch sets.

ing out 30- and 32-inch sizes at ■ plant in New York.

Thomson, maker of GE and RCA brand sets, is slated to start production of 31-inch tubes at plants in Indiana and Pennsylvania by midyear.

ANTITRUST QUESTION

NINTENDO PROBE SOUGHT

Nintendo's near-total control over the supply of games for the Nintendo Entertainment System may be loosened if a congressman succeeds in getting the Justice Department on the case.

House Small Business Antitrust Subcommittee Chairman Dennis Eckart (D-OH) has asked the Justice Department to probe the legality of Nintendo's game cartridge licensing practices.

Citing the results of his subcommittee's own investigation, Eckart said that under its licensing agreements Nintendo decides what titles will be released and how many will be made

available. A patented security system prevents other companies from manufacturing Nintendo-compatible game cartridges.

While he acknowledged that Nintendo's practices have protected the market from poor-quality games, Eckart charged that they also restrict competition. He said that in Japan, where the security system isn't used, cartridges sell for up to 50% less than they do in the US.

Nintendo said Eckart acted unfairly by making his report without letting Nintendo present its case. (R.G.)

A Matsushita Electronics factory in Ohio which is now in pilot production of 31-inch tubes will begin full-scale manufacturing this spring, if all goes as scheduled.

With the aid of local tube production, it's estimated that nearly one million direct-view sets with tubes 30 inches or greater will be available for sale this year. That's about triple the number sold in 1989.

BRIGHT IDEA

Firm Develops New TV Display

A breakthrough in the search for a bright, inexpensive high-definition TV display is being claimed by Aura Systems of El Segundo, California, which says it has filed for four patents covering a revolutionary projection system.

While Aura won't yet reveal details of the system, a spokesperson says it uses neither conventional nor special projection cathode-ray tubes, and doesn't utilize another technology proposed for HDTV: liquid crystal light valves. He declined to comment on speculation that the system's optics employ multi-colored lasers.

Aura contends that its technology could be cheap enough to replace tubes in big-screen home TVs, can be used in either front- or rear-screen projection systems and could put out enough brightness to be used in movie theaters. That application could make it practical for projection of HDTV.

Aura Systems is a firm involved in developing electro-optic hardware and advanced computing systems. (R.G.)

MARCH'S

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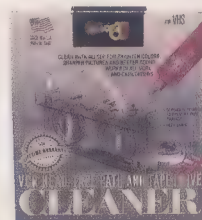
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Trade Show Spotlights Digital Audio and Laser Discs

By Stephen A. Booth,
Glenn Kenny & John R. Quain

LAS VEGAS—Although the new product offerings were thin at January's Winter Consumer Electronics Show, attendees of the semiannual trade fair here came away with strong promises for the future of the Super VHS, laser disc and digital audiotape formats.

In a surprise announcement made in Japan as well as the US, JVC said it had developed digital audio soundtracks for Super VHS Hi-Fi VCRs.

Meanwhile, Panasonic officials informed *VR* that the company will shortly enter the laser disc player market, and privately demonstrated two feature-packed models scheduled to debut later this spring. Publicly, NEC introduced its first laser disc player.

Panasonic also joined Sony in announcing the forthcoming introduction of digital audiotape (DAT) recorders for the US.

Elsewhere at WCES, Canon debuted its upgraded Hi8 camcorder line, Mitsubishi released a 120-inch rear-projection TV and tape suppliers introduced an assortment of improved cassettes.

DIGITAL AUDIO S-VHS

In its continuing upgrade of the VHS tape format, JVC announced the addition of digital audio soundtracks for Super VHS Hi-Fi VCRs. Like the Hi-Fi stereo tracks of current VCRs, the digital audio signal is encoded on the recording tape with the video information. Compatibility with existing hardware is maintained by recording Hi-Fi FM stereo and linear monaural audio tracks simultaneously with the digital signal.

In addition to the digital stereo, JVC also makes provision for a four-channel mode designed for multilingual sound capability. Both two- and four-track audio can be recorded in the SP and EP modes.

At presstime, neither JVC nor any other member of the VHS camp revealed marketing plans for VCRs with digital sound capability. Most likely, though, the technology will first appear in high-

end S-VHS decks with jog/shuttle wheels, frame-memory and similar features. Any prerecorded programming with digital soundtracks will have to await the availability of properly equipped duplication decks.

LASERS

Behind closed doors, Panasonic previewed two combination laser disc players for introduction later this spring. One is a full-featured model for the company's

classical music label also will enter the laser disc market this spring, with the first of a series of 45 concerts conducted by the late Herbert von Karajan.

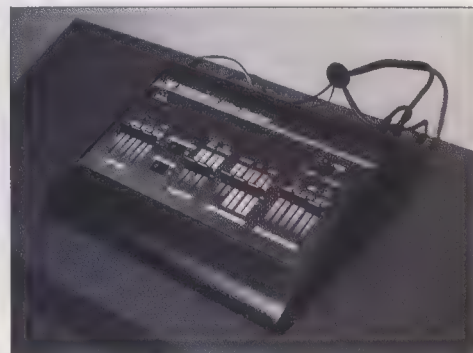
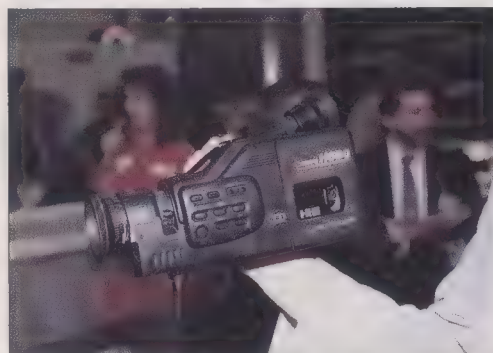
OTHER NEWS

•Canon introduced new versions of its H480 and A1 Hi8 camcorders. The new H680 (\$1,999) brings Hi-Fi stereo recording to the original Hi8 H480. Meanwhile, the flagship A1 has been upgraded to the A1 Mark II

an updated Mavica disc camera (\$850) that can record sound to accompany the still image on an adjacent track.

•Fox introduced its Remote Video System (\$150), a wireless transmitter for routing video signals to satellite monitors in the home. The company claims that its 250-foot range and use of the 902-928 MHz frequency band do not violate FCC regulations (see "Newsbreaks," Feb. '90 *VR*).

•In addition to showing a proto-



Canon's new Hi-band 8mm H680 (left), Videonics' Video Equalizer (right).

high-end Prism line, and the other is a midline unit. Both are auto-reverse players, and the last frame of the completed side is frozen for eight seconds before the flip side starts. The Prism model boasts multiple special function controls, a time-base corrector and a jog/shuttle wheel on both the player and its infrared remote control. Prices for both models will be announced closer to their delivery dates.

NEC joined the laser disc ranks with its auto-reverse LD-2000 (\$1,399). The combi player uses digital memory to obtain special effects from CLV discs.

DAT

Panasonic put a \$1,200 to \$1,300 price tag on the SV-DAT digital audiotape recorder that ships this summer from its Technics audio division. And although Sony withheld pricing information on the line of DAT home decks and car players it will introduce by summer, the Sony Classical division of CBS Records says its first 15 to 20 DAT releases will cost \$25 to \$30 each. The

(\$2,299) with new 410,000-pixel CCD pickup, 1/10000-second shutter and auto-tracking focus. The camera can lock on a subject and keep it in focus, no matter where it moves in the viewfinder frame.

•Mitsubishi once again raised the ante in rear-projection TV with a 120-inch model. The VS-12001 requires 6½ feet of depth and is designed for custom installation at about \$20,000.

•Videonics offered its Video Equalizer (\$300) for noise reduction, picture enhancement, color correction and audio mixing. Unlike signal processors that use joysticks, Videonics borrows its ergonomics from audio mixing boards by using sliding faders. A split-screen feature lets you make before-and-after comparisons.

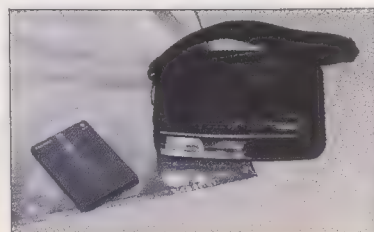
•Toshiba offered an all-digital still-video camera, which stores images on an integrated circuit card instead of an analog magnetic disc. The price is \$23,000 for an entire system, which includes a personal computer and DAT recorder for logging and filing up to 1,000 stills plus sound.

•Also in still video, Sony unveiled

type DAT deck, Thomson Consumer Electronics (parent company of GE-RCA) demonstrated a recordable CD system. The company also said it will introduce audio hi-fi systems later this year.

•In videotape, TDK introduced a T-160 S-VHS and a 30-minute S-VHS-C cassette (\$15 each). JVC and Panasonic also debuted longer S-VHS-C tapes, at \$17 and \$11, respectively. The 30-minute cassettes record for 90 minutes in the EP mode. For the Hi8 format, TDK introduced metal-evaporated and metal-powder formulations, while Maxell showed metal powder. Both companies announced new, higher-grade formulations for the conventional 8mm format tape.

Toshiba's still-video camera.



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MOVEABLE FEASTS

How the Video Revolution Liberated the Slaves of Time

BY STEPHEN A. BOOTH

**Video Review
editor in chief
Stephen A. Booth
is the former
electronics editor at
Popular Mechanics
and has written for
Rolling Stone.
He has been a
VR contributor
for 10 years.**

March used to be the cruelest month. It is that point in the calendar where, for all the wrong reasons, TV always has offered some of my favorite movies.

The feast of St. Patrick falls on the 17th day, and so, year after year, broadcasters dutifully trot out those great Irish warhorses, movies such as John Ford's *The Quiet Man* or Disney's *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*.

March has a 15th day, too, and occasionally the more cerebral telecasters will commemorate the Ides with one version or another of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

But aside from this dramatization of ancient political struggles, television in March is overwhelmingly green, and most cinematic portrayals of revolution take place in 20th-century Ireland in grim black and white. *The Informer* sometimes makes an appearance. Less frequently, and always at an off-hour, you might find *Odd Man Out*. Seldom televised at all is *Shake Hands with the Devil*, but its rare, pre-dawn visitations are always worth the vigil.

One had no choice but to stand watch, chained to the tube, back in those days before videotape and videodisc liberated us

from the tyranny of broadcasters' schedules and sensibilities. What made March particularly cruel was that every movie with a brogue in it was televised during the week of St. Patrick's—or sometimes in just two or three days. Miss *The Informer* or miss a swell party? Disney's leprechauns—or the spring-training game from Florida? Such were the frustrations before my first VCR made those questions academic.

That VCR was acquired about the time that *Video Review* commenced publication, so I have an anniversary of my own to celebrate. For want of a better slogan, I'll toast to 10 years of intellectual freedom—unrestricted access to vast stores of cultural and informational programming, including some you might create yourself with a camcorder. The testament to that freedom is the ever-growing collection of videocassettes and discs that competes with books for shelf space in my library.

Back in the evil old days before time-shifting, missing a program didn't annoy me so much. It was the arbitrariness of TV scheduling I found so frustrating. Dramas such as *Odd Man Out* or *The Informer* can stand on their own at any time of year. So

can the 1951 movie version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Similarly, we find Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine in *The Apartment* only between Christmas and New Year's Day. And although the opening lines of the novel *Moby Dick* describe "a damp, drizzly November" of the soul, this should not relegate John Huston's epic version to the time slots between Thanksgiving Day football games.

Thanks to the widespread availability of programming on home video, we now can watch *Yankee Doodle Dandy* at Christmas and *Julius Caesar* at Halloween. A good movie on TV usually whets my appetite for another—but the broadcast schedule rarely delivers on the tease. With a home video library, we can follow a whim and create double features or triple specials of our own choosing.

For example, when I see John Ford's *The Quiet Man*, I'm always tempted to follow up with his earlier *How Green Was My Valley*, and only then with *The Informer*—a different kind of Ford classic, where Victor McLaglen is closer to his fighting weight. If the needle gets stuck in a McLaglen groove, I'm onto *Gunga Din* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*.

Odd Man Out prompts a similar parlay of titles. Though I find it hard to buy James Mason as an IRA soldier, and the movie's pre-psychedelic special-effects don't excite me any more than they do in *Pride of the Marines*, there's no doubt that the director is the same Carol Reed who later delivered *The Third Man*. That's what screens on the monitor next.

Television might treat you to a Stanley Kubrick festival. But I'm not inclined to view *2001: A Space Odyssey* after *Paths of Glory*. With a home video library, I can switch directors and follow a theme. So give me *Breaker Morant*. Similarly, as much as I like Cagney as doctor by day, revolutionary at night in *Shake Hands with the Devil*, I don't follow up with *White Heat* or *13 Rue Madeleine*. Instead, my nightcap here would be a Nelson Eddy-Jeanette MacDonald musical, something like *Maytime*.

This matchup isn't just arbitrary. It's entirely sentimental. The Cagney thriller was the first movie I saw in a theater at the neighborhood cinema where my father used to take the kids to escape the summer heat. For the same reason, my mother once hauled us, kicking and screaming, to seven straight nights of Eddy-MacDonald smoochers. It was a revival festival of hits by the romantic duet—a double feature every night—and about the only way folks of my parents' generation could once again view these flicks of their youth.

Until today. For less than the price of two movie ducats, Mom can watch the two lovebirds croon on video. Whenever she wants. As many times as she wants. As for *Shake Hands with the Devil*, I have a copy. It is taped off at 3:30 a.m. broadcast, replete with commercials and multipath ghosts. I would gladly buy a prerecorded edition for my collection, but a sale copy does not exist.

Indeed, much of my video collection consists of early time-shift copies, whose quality is only as good as what the station aired and what the reception was like at the time. But as the price of prerecorded programs has come down, I've found myself replacing the home-rolled versions with store-bought ones. In much the same way, compact discs have supplanted the older LP versions of recordings in my music collection. Usually, the remastered digital copies bring out something that wasn't audible on the vinyl. In fact, the deeper my video collection grows, the more I come to realize that I'm repeating a habit of library building patterned after music and books. Collecting is only partly a matter of concern for quality. Its main impetus is novelty.

In music, for example, a liking for Louis Armstrong's "Dippermouth Blues" compels a jazz buff to seek out its earliest version, where Satch is a sideman to King Oliver, his mentor. If you like Bix Beiderbecke's cornet playing, you'll probably seek out recordings of the 1917 Original Dixieland Jazz Band that influenced him. Ditto with Fats Waller. To know him is to love his earliest piano-roll recordings. Moving up to modern times, the renditions of Jelly Roll Morton's tunes on Ry Cooder's 1978 album *Jazz* sent me running to buy everything Morton had done—and everything Cooder had recorded before and since.

The pattern is much the same in literature. Admiration for an author's masterpieces sends you mining for the smaller gems. The perfect case in point: After Ridley Scott's 1977 movie *The Duellists* made its debut, I haunted the used-book marts until I found the long-out-of-print Joseph Conrad short story ("The Duel") on which the picture was based. I suspect this type of man-bites-dog story will become more commonplace as video reacquaints us with literature.

A passion for movies prompts us along similar paths. We have to see the alternate takes, the earlier versions, the remakes—and perhaps collect them. Since 1931, there have been three movie versions of *The Front Page*. Each has its own charm, so owning the 1940 Cary Grant-Rosalind Russell classic (*His Gal Friday*) isn't enough. Video buffs know that there's a longer, British version of *The Third Man*, where director Carol Reed does

the introductory narration in place of Joseph Cotton. And they're savvy to the extra 13 minutes in the TV print of Rod Serling's *Requiem for a Heavyweight*.

Novelty in collecting needn't be entirely a cultural affair. It can be just for fun. Today, there is more archival footage—especially from sports—accessible to home viewers than ever before. With this window on the past, legends are subject to our scrutiny and assessment. We can study a young Sugar Ray Robinson or a younger Louis Armstrong. To do so in the days before home video, you had to see the boxing documentaries that preceded the undercard at a closed-circuit prizefight, or you had to catch David Chertok's *Jazz on Film* reels, a sort of undercard to the old Newport-New York Jazz Festival.

Speaking of legends, as kids, we used to ponder the tales about the mysterious "fadeaway" pitch of Christy Mathewson, star of the 1900-1916 New York Giants. For years, this pitch was the "lost chord" of baseball trivia. Believers said the secret died with the pitcher. Skeptics said it was just a right-handed screwball. Today, we can watch an old newsreel on video and judge for ourselves. The same goes for the controversial "phantom punch" in the second Sonny Liston-Cassius Clay heavyweight title bout. Did "The Bear" take a dive, or did Ali-to-Be deck him? I'd rule K.O. But you really couldn't tell from the film footage, even in slow-motion, until laser videodisc made it all clear with frame-by-frame access.

Besides enjoying archival footage for its own sake, I've found that it has a wonderful way of eliciting reminiscences from older relatives and acquaintances. A video biography of Frank Sinatra prompts the confession of how an otherwise-bookish aunt once played hookey from school to catch a glimpse of the matinee-idol outside the old Paramount. A sports documentary brings forth evidence that Joe DiMaggio's reputation for coldness and aloofness might be undeserved. It comes in the form of an anecdote, how Joltin' Joe once let my father and his pals accompany him on a 16-block trek to bring a fur coat to Dorothy Arnold, and talked baseball with the boys all the way.

These memories and observations might never have surfaced without visual stimuli. In its power to uncork torrents of oral history, video works in much the same way as Berenice Abbott's black-and-white photos of New York in the 1930s. We are all the richer for this. □



Illustration: Ronald Ridgeway



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Not since the introduction of color has a breakthrough in video created such a quantum leap in life-like picture quality. The picture definition is so superior, *Video Review*, *High Fidelity* and *Popular Science* exclaimed Philips IDTV "Product of the Year." And from *Audio Video International*, "Innovation of the Year."

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PHILIPS

Enter the LASERDISC SWEEPS

THE  PIONEER VIDEO REVIEW MARCH TRIVIA CONTEST

What latest home video format brings *The Last Emperor* to your living room with such superb quality that you think you are in China? It's the laserdisc format, of course! This innovation allows you to hear clearer sounds and see sharper images—an experience you won't forget.

This month, *Video Review* quizzes you on your knowledge of laserdisc technology. Get the answers right, and you might win:

1 GRAND PRIZE

Pioneer CLD-1070 combination LaserDisc/CD player. Plays all formats, from 12" LDs to 3" CD singles. Offers remote control and complete programmability. LaserDisc is hi-fi for the eyes and ears—with picture quality 60% sharper than an ordinary VCR and pure digital sound.

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Name _____
Address _____
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- A combination laserdisc/CD player plays all but the following formats:
 - 12-inch movie disc
 - 8-inch music video disc
 - Vinyl LP
 - 5-inch CD and 3-inch CD single
- Which home video format features CD sound?
 - S-VHS
 - Laserdisc
 - Beta
- The combination laserdisc/CD player outperforms the ordinary VCR in the following areas:
 - Picture quality
 - Sound quality
 - All of the above
- Consumers can now purchase combination laserdisc/CD players for as little as:
 - \$1,499
 - \$599
 - \$4,999
- When it comes to watching movies at home, what format do film professionals, like director Bernardo Bertolucci, prefer?
 - VHS
 - Beta
 - Laserdisc
- The average retail price of a laserdisc is approximately:
 - \$124.95
 - \$89.95
 - \$34.95

PIONEER/VIDEO REVIEW LASERDISC TRIVIA CONTEST OFFICIAL RULES

1. ELIGIBILITY. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER SWEEPSTAKES. Sweepstakes open to residents of the U.S.A., except employees and representatives of Viare Publishing Corp., *Video Review*, Pioneer LDCA, Inc., their affiliates, subsidiaries, agencies and members of their immediate families. Void where prohibited or restricted by law.

2. ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS. Send your answers for each of the six multiple choice questions, along with your name and address on an official entry form (or use a 3"x5" card) to: VIDEO REVIEW SWEEPSTAKES, Dept. 09910, P.O. Box 57736, Boulder, CO 80322-7736.

Enter as often as you like, but each entry must be mailed separately. No mechanically reproduced entries will be accepted. All entries must be received no later than April 18, 1990. *Video Review* is not responsible for late, lost or misdirected mail.

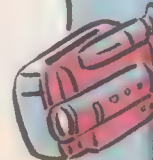
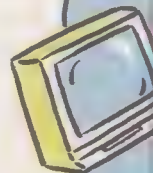
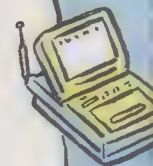
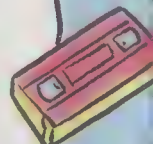
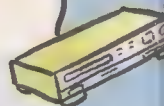
3. DRAWING. Winners will be chosen in a random drawing from among all entries received to be held on or about April 23, 1990. The drawing will be conducted by the publishers of *Video Review*, whose decisions are final. Odds of winning depend on the number of qualified entries received.

4. GENERAL. Prizes are non-transferable. No prize substitutions except by sponsors due to unavailability.

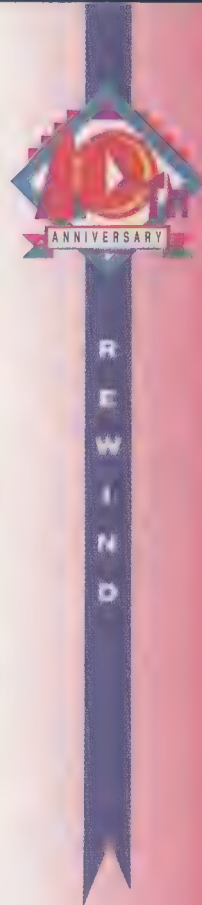
All manufacturers' warranties apply. Taxes on all prizes are the sole responsibility of the winners. Offer is subject to all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, and is void where prohibited or otherwise restricted by law. All prizes will be awarded. One winner per household. Winner will be notified by mail. Grand prize winner will be required to execute an Affidavit of Eligibility and Liability/Publicity Release within 21 days of notification or prize will be awarded to an alternate winner. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of prizes. Winners agree that Viare Publishing, *Video Review*, and Pioneer LDCA, Inc. will have no liability in connection with acceptance or use of prize awards herein. Winners' entries and acceptance of any prize offered constitutes permission to use winners' names, photographs or other likenesses for purposes of advertising and promotion on behalf of *Video Review* without further compensation to the winners. By entering, participants agree to these rules and the decisions of the judges.

5. WINNERS LIST. No telephone requests for information about winners will be accepted. For a list of grand and first prize winners, send a separate, stamped, self-addressed envelope by May 31, 1990 to: *Video Review* Winners List, Dept. 09910, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010-6002, ATTN: Promotion Dept.

6. PRIZES. Sweepstakes prizes and their approximate retail values are as follows: (1) Grand Prize—Pioneer CLD-1070 combination LaserDisc/CD player. Retail value: \$599. (10) First Prizes—A *Video Review* T-shirt. Retail value: \$15 each.



THE LASER DISC



The Rise and Fall and Rise of the Format That Was Just Too Good to Go Away Quietly

BY DAVID HAJDU

A fun fact of science: Astronomers have discovered a source of light so far away that they think it comes from the beginning of time. If so, scientists say, they can watch the very birth of the universe as if it were happening right now.

This phenomenon, which is so weird it doesn't have a name yet, is exactly like looking at the videodisc field. As home video reaches the end of its first decade, you can look at the disc format and watch video's whole history replaying itself. Fans of the technology share a clubby, almost evangelical, zeal; the equipment is just beginning to break through to the general public, and major companies such as Panasonic and NEC are talking about introducing their first gear in the format this year.

As contributing editor Robert Gerson wrote in the January 1990 issue of *Video Review*, "1990 will be the moment of truth for laser video."

A video decade earlier, however, in the premiere issue of *VR*, the same editor mirrored the young field's enthusiasm for disc technology with a far more optimistic projection. "Within 10 years," he wrote, "videodiscs and players will become an \$8-billion business annually, or bigger than commercial television broadcasting and twice the size of the phonograph record industry." (The truth turned out to be about 1/80 of that projection.)

It was only logical at the time for *VR* to proclaim 1980 as "the year of the videodisc." As a matter of fact, we were afraid we were late with the news. Three other publications had already

FAST SCAN

1935

Phonovision "recorded television records" appear on shelves in London department store.

Dec. 1978

Magnavox Magnavision laser disc player and MCA DiscoVision discs go on sale in Atlanta. DiscoVision unrelated to dance craze of the period.



April 1980

In its debut issue, *Video Review* predicts videodiscs will become an \$8 billion business by 1990. (Off by about \$7 billion.)

Sept. 1980

First *VR*/CBS Labs test report of a disc player. Pioneer VP-1000 called "amazing technological achievement."

called 1977, 1978 and 1979 the year of the videodisc. To make up for lost time, however, we made a point over the years to call 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1988 the year of the videodisc.

What was wrong with all those years, and how could they embarrass us like that?

The truth is, disc technology had a series of false starts long before the '80s. The first home discs and their players (called recorded television records and phonovision players, respectively) went on sale in 1935, in Selfridge's department store on London's Oxford Street. Their drawback: awful quality, and the fact that nobody had TV sets yet.

Through the '50s and '60s in America, RCA talked frequently about plans to develop "TV records," which the company said it expected to rival color sets in popularity. And in the mid-'70s, Decca and Telefunken developed a serviceable videodisc system, made it available in West Germany, and scrapped it almost immediately because of performance problems.

On December 15, 1978, the first practical, high-performance home videodisc player went on sale in America. VCRs were still almost unknown to the general public, and dreamers in labs were still roughing plans for products of the future, such as CD players, camcorders and monitor/receivers. Yet there at Rich's department store in Atlanta, a few dozen customers picked up the world's first high-resolution, Hi-Fi stereo, interactive, laser-read videodisc players. The historic gadgets were called Magnavox Magnavision, and they employed the same basic

technology as the latest laser players for 1990.

Their only problem, which proved to be a big drawback for years to come, was that people didn't buy them. Early on, everybody seemed to believe it was necessary to choose only one format—tape or disc—rather than enjoy the benefits of both. For its February '81 issue, *VR* even commissioned a psychiatrist to create a psychological quiz to help readers determine "Tape or Disc—Which Is Right for You?" *Q: Do you prefer (a) showers or (b) baths?* Shower types are right for tape, and bath people are best for discs (obviously).

Compounding this confusion over the first half of the video decade, video fans had to confront a constant—and constantly changing—onslaught of claims about *three* incompatible disc formats. In addition to the laser format, RCA coughed up the "TV record" system it had been developing since the '50s, and it appeared to have been developed in the '50s. Called CED (for capacitance electronic disc), the system used a quaint needle-in-a-groove technique, just like the Edison Victrola, which CED soon joined in the RCA archives of discontinued, outdated equipment. The third system discussed for years—VHD (for video high density)—never even came out in this country (although it is still available in Japan).

"If there's such a thing as an industry with a death wish, [this] is the one," *VR* reported in an analysis of disc developments during the first half of the video decade. As powerful interests dabbled in the format, the public watched with detachment and

Fall 1981
First CED disc players are made available, through the Sears catalog. Hitachi-made players priced at \$499.

Oct. 1981
First VR/CBS Labs test of CED player. Sears model number—934.54780150—more impressive than its specs.

May 1982
Avon salespeople selling CED discs and players door to door, VR reports.

June 1982
VHD disc format postponed indefinitely for US market, after years of hype.



Feb. 1981
"LaserVision" adopted by disc companies as standard nomenclature. Term previously used to describe super-hero powers.



July 1982
Pioneer LD-1100, first disc player with CX noise reduction, reviewed in VR.



a touch of disdain. Laser video became the format that wouldn't go away. Why?

Maybe quality had something to do with it. All along there was never any question of the laser format's unparalleled performance and practical consumer value. Pioneer's Laser-Vision player was and remains the Rolls-Royce of home video, the format of preference for connoisseurs of video image and sound quality. (And for the most extreme video snob, the fact that you can't make laser disc recordings is an actual boon.) In fact, the list of "firsts" introduced to home video by the laser format is virtually an outline of the major technological milestones of the past video decade. Laser players innovated home video stereo sound, special effects, random access, noise reduction, high resolution, computer interfacing and digital sound—all before the same technologies and features were adapted to home VCRs, TV sets and other equipment.

In video enthusiasts' circles, the laser format has come to mean more than mere buttons and readouts. It serves a somewhat social need: It's a certain standard by which both equipment and its owners can be judged. Like a Leica still camera in photography or a Martin guitar in music, a laser disc player serves as a symbol of its owner's savvy. Some videophiles are videophiles by definition; they *have* to have laser, simply because it's the best (so far, at least—videophiles are always plan-

ning ahead). Others are videophiles by education; they acquire the taste for sophisticated equipment like laser. And others aim to become videophiles by association; ownership of the right equipment allows them to live like videophiles.

In recent years, laser has finally begun to find its voice, as well as its audience. Special disc pressings of collectible movies and other programming have been taking full advantage of the performance features and capabilities that make laser so different from videotape. The Criterion Collection, MCA, MGM/UA and other labels have expanded the appeal of laser discs by producing discs with digital sound, alternative soundtracks (offering critical commentary) and an adventurous variety of supplementary visual and aural materials (such as outtakes, storyboards, scripts, behind-the-scenes photographs, interviews and more). The high resolution of the format also makes letterboxing more feasible.

The emergence of compact discs over the past half decade has also had a major impact on public awareness of the laser format and its benefits. In response, laser disc makers have been working at drawing fans of CDs into laser video, through the introduction of CD-V (compact disc-video) and CD+G (compact disc+graphics) discs over the past couple of years. If they're successful, videodiscs could indeed evolve out of the videophile's niche and into the mainstream. And 1990 could, after all, be the year of the disc.

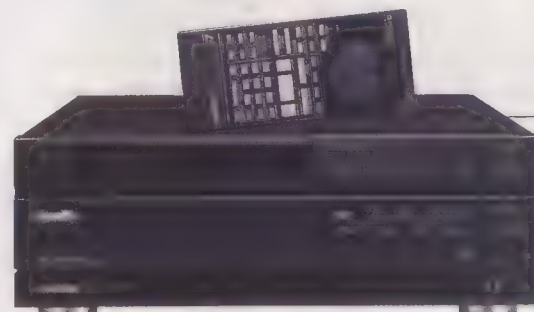
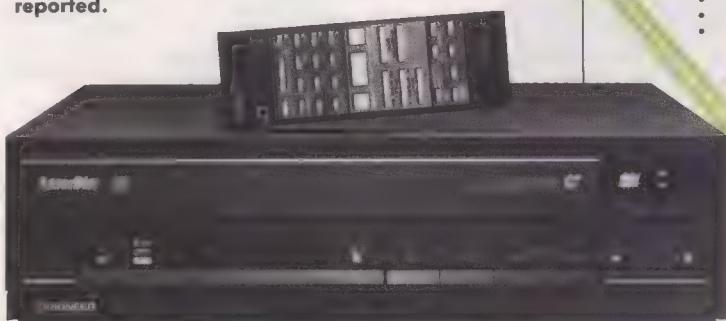
If not, there's always 1991.

March 1984
Digital audio
debuts on
laser disc.



Sept. 1983
Nine-inch
"singles"
announced.

Oct. 1983
First practical
consumer laser
disc/computer
interfaces and
software
reported.



June 1984
RCA scraps
CED format,
VR reports.
Move soon
followed by six
other format
brands.

Nov. 1984
LV/CD "combi"
players debut.

Jan. 1988
CD+G discs
with still
graphics
demonstrated.



Sept. 1988
Pioneer offers
players with
digital special
effects in CLV
(constant linear
velocity) mode.

Feb. 1989
Player innova-
tions include
double drawer,
continuous side
playback,
"Super"-style
Y/C (brightness/
color) connec-
tions and,
finally, built-in
digital time-
base correction.

SHOOTING HIGH

While the debate over broadcast standards rages, three producers are busy making HDTV

By Alison Johns

In a darkened room on Manhattan's West Side, actor/producer Michael Douglas watched as Sugar Ray Leonard baited Roberto Duran. The aging Duran seemed to be sleepwalking, and Sugar Ray was pressing his advantage, taunting his opponent with cartoonish wind-up punches and a slapstick tap dance. The sportswriters who called the fight a dud the next morning had missed the point. What had attracted Douglas, financier Carl Icahn, musician Lou Reed and then-New York mayor-elect David Dinkins to the closed-circuit broadcast was greater than the men in the ring. It was a matter of seeing for themselves the first commercial transmission of a high-definition television signal to venues in the United States (see "Newsbreaks," Feb. '90 VR).

The telecast's producer, HDTV Sports, hoped to prove on that December evening that a multi-city closed-circuit HDTV network was achievable and marketable. Bankrolled by NHK Enterprises USA (the American cousin of the Japanese national broadcaster NHK), the producer scored a historic end run around America's broadcasters who are prevented from implementing any advanced television system themselves until the FCC has endorsed one of many proposed transmission systems. HDTV is here, the telecast announced to some 5,000 viewers in six cities; it's not just a topic for discussion at engineering conferences and on Capitol Hill.

But then HDTV has been in the US for more than three

years already. Millions of Americans, without knowing it, have watched television commercials, music videos and movies that were shot in HDTV but transferred to other media. And while politicians and technocrats filibuster the issue of advanced television, US-based production companies are producing more and more of HDTV's sharp, wide-screen images—for the Leonard/Duran fight, for special effects work and for less effects-intensive video production.

In Hoboken, New Jersey, the lights cut as director Zbigniew Rybczynski finishes a take for his latest HDTV production. He's making a 50-minute string of music videos called *The Orchestra* slated to air on PBS's *Great Performances* this spring. Fundamental to the piece are complex effects achieved by matting or compositing together several layers of video. Today Rybczynski is reviving Chopin's "Funeral March," with the engrossing, often funny, video effects he has used to enliven other music videos such as Mick Jagger's "Let's Work," John Lennon's "Imagine" and Herb Alpert's "Keep Your Eye on Me."

Throughout the day, a series of actors costumed in 19th-century garb have moved around for the cameras in front of a giant

wall painted a celestial, swimming-pool blue. It happens that this great wall with its striking paint job is the linchpin in almost every one of the director's effects-laden works. After the actors hit their marks against the blue limbo, the high-definition videotape recorders in the machine room play back the scene. In the playback, however, the blue screen has disappeared; instead, the actors are standing in the Paris of 100 years ago. Their backdrop is coming from a separate video source. As the tape rolls, Rybczynski's surreal vision comes to life: Dozens of 19th-century ghosts fade on and off the screen, haunting the streets, playing out memories of their lives and hitting chords on a nightmarishly elongated piano keyboard.

The Ultimatte image-compositing system that Rybczynski and his crew are using for these effects isn't unique to HDTV, but it looks more realistic when it is used with that production system. Ultimatte works by identifying the pure blue signal of the background and filling that area with a video signal from another source. (The process is a highly evolved version of the effect used nightly on local news broadcasts when weathermen walk around in front of changing maps.) The high resolution of HDTV creates cleaner, more realistic mattes than

those created on a standard television production system—even when the HDTV special effects are later converted to standard TV. Using HDTV all but eliminates

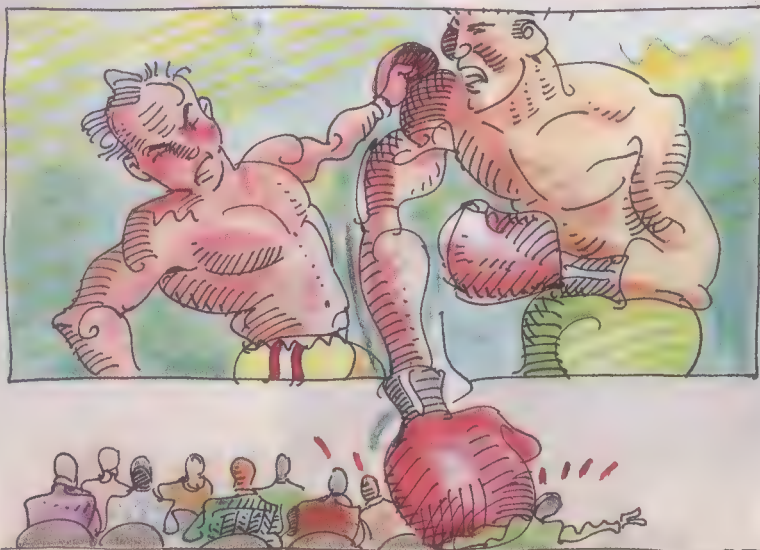


Illustration: Yvonne Buchanan

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plus shipping/handling with membership. Details on other side.

Paula Abdul—Forever Your Girl. *Cold Hearted; Straight Up*; more. (Virgin) 374-637

Belinda Carlisle—Runaway Horses (RCA) 400-788

Faster Pussycat—Wake Me When It's Over (Elektra) 401-786

Dionne Warwick—Greatest Hits (1979-1990) (Arista) 401-679

Loverboy—Big Ones (Columbia) 401-661

Pat Benatar—Best Shots (Chrysalis) 401-646

Yo-Yo Ma—Great Cello Concertos (CBS Master) 401-604

Best Of The Canadian Brass (CBS Masterworks) 401-596

Ars—Truth In A Structured Form (Imagine) 401-539

Survivor—Greatest Hits (Scotti Brothers) 401-521

Ace Frehley—Trouble Walkin' (AI/Megaforce Worldw) 401-299

Barbra Streisand—A Collection: Greatest Hits... And More (Columbia) 401-141



Melissa Etheridge—Brave And Crazy (Island) 388-090

The Cars—Greatest Hits (Elektra) 339-903

Foreigner—Records (Atlantic) 318-055

Don McLean—For The Memories Volume 1 & 2 (Gold Castle) 401-224

Joan Baez—Speaking Of Dreams (Gold Castle) 401-216

Bruce Willis—If I Don't Kill You, It Just Makes You Stronger (Motown) 401-182

Robert Palmer—Addictions, Volume One (Island) 400-937

The Front (Columbia) 400-903

Paul Simon—Negotiations And Love Songs (Warner Bros.) 400-721/390-724

Rolling Stones—Steel Wheels. *Mixed Emotions; Sad, Sad, Sad*; etc. (Rolling Stones Rec.) 387-738

The Best Of Luther Vandross—The Best Of Love (Epic) 400-473/390-476

DJ Jazzy Jeff & Fresh Prince—And In This Corner (Jive/RCA) 400-838

Eagles—Live (Elektra) 400-713

Joe Cocker—Mad Dogs And Englishmen (A&M) 389-783

Tommy Bolin—The Ultimate... (Geffen) 389-486/399-485

The Band—To Kingdom Come... (Capitol) 388-181

The Best Of The Dregs—Divided We Stand (Arista) 386-979

The Coasters Greatest Hits (Atco) 384-370

Best Of Cher (EMI) 381-509

The Best Of Canned Heat (EMI) 380-832

Bo Diddley Is A Gunslinger (Chess) 379-677

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young—So Far (Atlantic) 378-745

Grateful Dead—Skeletons From The Closet (Warner Bros.) 378-406

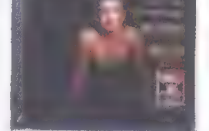
Roy Orbison—The All-Time Hits, Vols. 1 & 2 (Columbia Special Prod.) 377-945

The Who—Who's Better, Who's Best (MCA) 376-657

Pretenders—The Singles (Sire) 362-541

Billy Ocean—Greatest Hits (Jive/RCA) 400-879

Bros—The Time (Epic) 400-895



Brahms: Violin Concerto; Bruch: Concerto No.1. Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg; Edo De Waart and Minnesota Orch. (Angel) 400-135

Michel Camilo—On Fire (Epic) 389-999

Tracy Chapman—Crossroads. *Title cut plus Bridges; Subcity; This Time*; etc. (Elektra) 387-951

Bob Dylan—Oh Mercy (Columbia) 389-262

Reba McEntire—Live (MCA) 400-739

Living Colour—Vivid (Epic) 370-833

Jerry Lee Lewis—18 Original Sun Greatest Hits (Rhino) 369-108

The Very Best Of Poco (Epic) 367-623

Marvin Gaye—Greatest Hits (Motown) 367-565

Joni Mitchell—Court and Spark (Asylum) 367-102

Traffic—John Barleycorn Must Die (Island) 364-935

Van Morrison—Saint Dominic's Preview (Warner Bros.) 364-927

Alice Cooper—Billion Dollar Babies (Warner Bros.) 363-531

Little Feat—Dixie Chicken (Warner Bros.) 363-515

Bob Dylan—Highway 61 Revisited (Columbia) 362-285

Gold & Platinum Volume Six (Realml) 388-355

Tom Petty—Full Moon Fever. *Free Fallin'; I Won't Back Down*; etc. (MCA) 382-484

Rickie Lee Jones—Flying Cowboys (Geffen) 388-199

Joe Satriani—Flying In A Blue Dream (Relativity) 400-655

Best Of The Doors (Elektra) 357-616/397-612

Yes—Close To The Edge (Atlantic) 351-965

Traffic—The Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys (Island) 351-924

Aretha Franklin—30 Greatest Hits (Atlantic) 350-793/390-799

Rolling Stones—Exile On Main Street (Rolling Stones Rec.) 350-652

Rolling Stones—Sticky Fingers (Rolling Stones Rec.) 350-645

Buddy Holly—From The Orig. Master Tapes (MCA) 348-110

Jethro Tull—Aqualung (Chrysalis) 345-157

Yellowjackets—The Spin (MCA) 388-173

Cher—Heart Of Stone. *If I Could Turn Back Time*; plus more. (Geffen) 383-893

Taylor Dayne—Can't Fight Fate (Arista) 388-017

Charlie Daniels Band—Simple Man (Epic) 400-523

Best Of Procol Harum (A&M) 344-457

The Byrds—Greatest Hits (Columbia) 342-501

Bad Company—10 From 6 (Atlantic) 341-313

A Decade Of Steely Dan (MCA) 341-073

Best Of Kansas (CBS Assoc.) 327-742

The Jackson 5—Greatest Hits (Motown) 327-148

Joe Cocker—Greatest Hits (A&M) 320-911

Elton John—Greatest Hits (MCA) 319-541

The Babys—The Babys Anthology (Chrysalis) 312-256

Creedence Clearwater Revival—20 Greatest Hits (Fantasy) 308-049

Elton John—Sleeping With The Past (MCA) 387-993

Mötley Crüe—Dr. Feelgood. *Title cut plus Without You; T.N.T.*; etc. (Elektra) 387-944

Plácido Domingo—The Unknown Puccini (CBS Master.) 387-829

Georgia Satellites—In The Land Of Salvation And Sin (Elektra) 400-598

The Best Of Emerson, Lake & Palmer (Atlantic) 306-969

James Taylor—Sweet Baby James (Warner Bros.) 292-284

Best Of The Grateful Dead (Warner Bros.) 291-633

Best Of The Doobie Bros. (Warner Bros.) 291-278

Jim Croce—Photographs & Memories: His Greatest Hits (Saja) 246-868

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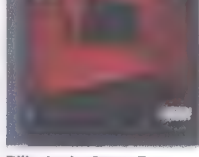


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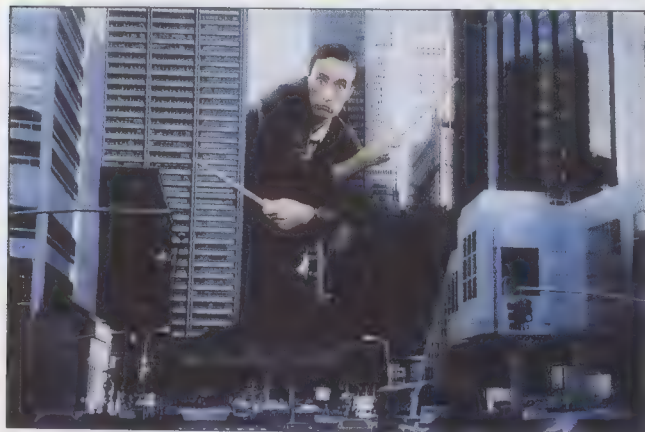
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the jagged edges between the actors and the background, where the different layers of video meet.

Rybczynski, who won an Oscar in 1983 for an animated film short, only rarely uses film now; he considers the medium restrictive and outmoded. The pictures he sees in his head are electronic ones. Using the same technique he employs in the Chopin piece, he proposes shooting a full-length movie called *Rosebud* on location in Rome without the actors. The idea is to tape all establishing location shots in Italy and direct the actors on a soundstage in Hoboken, combining them with the Italian locations via Ultimatte.

While Rybczynski is known for his art pieces, the people at his company, Zbig Vision, are looking to move HDTV into the mainstream. It is not enough, they have decided, to merely produce high definition. In order to open up the market and make converts, they must get involved in distribution, too. Their first step was to work with Platinum Sports Network to form HDTV Sports for the production and telecast of the Leonard/Duran fight. "The value of HDTV—forgetting about the number of lines and the broadcast standard—can't be ascertained until people have seen it," says Stuart Weiss, president of Zbig Vision, "Until the public exposure is there, the political debate won't make sense."



While Duran/Leonard was a loss leader, Fred Rosenberg, president of Platinum Sports Network, hopes to develop more programming—he hints at an NFL division playoff, a concert, a Tyson fight—and put it within the reach of venues throughout the US. The first target is sports bars, which would be offered the opportunity to rent equipment to receive and decode high-definition signals.

he shoots in high-def shows up in US households after it has been downconverted—that is, adapted from the 1,125-line HDTV signal to the 525 lines of standard US NTSC video. Rebo and his partner Denis Bieber engineered the first American feature movie shot in high-definition video, *White Hot*, which, after a quick theatrical appearance, was released to the home video market last spring by Academy Entertainment.

Before: A basketball player, a New York playground and blue paint. After: Using high-definition TV and an Ultimatte, it all becomes a broadcast promo for a local sportscaster.

"You've got to roll your own money," says Rosenberg, "because most of the heavy venture capitalists and wildcatters who take flyers on high technology are sitting on the sidelines of high-definition television because of the standards problems."

Barry Rebo is a production visionary who plugged into HDTV in 1986. His HDTV work is extensive, yet mostly invisible to the public; material that

ment. Rebo's Manhattan studio has made its biggest mark on Madison Avenue, where the partners have convinced ad agencies to shoot nearly 20 US broadcast commercials in HDTV. The last quarter of 1989 was a busy period for Rebo—his shop produced six spots in four months for clients such as Sony, Honda and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

One result of Rebo's technical homework is a television commercial for Sony's Video Walkman that started airing last November. In it, a crane lifts a solid-looking suburban house off its foundation, an illusion created by shooting a miniature model of the house being uprooted in high def.

Another of the high-definition studio's technical victories is a music video for percussionist David Van Tieghem, which features the musician walking through a miniature Manhattan, drumming on skyscrapers. New York sportscaster Len Berman got the treatment too, in a promo for his station's local newscast in which Berman's image is superimposed on a playground wall. In both cases, high definition has put what were formerly pricey film optical effects into the reach of lower video budgets.

With an impressive track record behind them in commercials, Bieber and Rebo have their sights set on full-length TV shows. The company is developing its own properties—among them a series of 30-minute high-def thrillers and a package of concert performances for worldwide sale. Rebo worked on the *Hurricane Irene* concert tape—featuring Peter Gabriel, Lou Reed and Jackson Browne—which was downconverted to 525 lines for airing on SuperStation TBS and for distribution on

Continued on page 88

Rooms at

BY
RON
GOLDBERG

*A few privileged glimpses into
state-of-the-art media
environments—and the design
philosophies behind them*

the Top

*I*t's no trick to acquire a large array of top-flight video and audio gear. With a little technical know-how, a dash of consumer smarts and a whole lot of money, anybody can do it. Similarly, setting up the equipment, while not exactly a brainless task, isn't a terribly huge challenge; cleaving to a few simple rules



and marking all your cables ought to ensure that everything works properly together. What is tricky is creating a room in which the gear looks like it belongs, integrating the equipment into a total environment that's both fully functional and enjoyable to be in. If you're not happy with the room you've set aside for entertainment, then you're getting off on the wrong foot. All the rooms showcased here represent very happy encounters between equipment and environment.

Left:
Perspective in action; note how the natural shape of the room is adapted to make the big-screen monitor/receiver its focal point. Although the room is only medium-sized, a convincing theaterlike effect is achieved by leading sightlines from all seating positions directly to the screen.

Right: An effective media room design both optimizes the equipment and leaves the aesthetic qualities of the room intact. Putting the monitor/receiver against the window, of course, minimizes reflected glare on the screen.



*Right:
Short of hiding it,
a media room design can
integrate equipment into the visual
scheme of the room. In this
setup, the jet-black gear becomes a
visual centerpiece in the wall.*

*Below: the hidden approach, before and
after. One need only open a cabinet
and lower a screen to transform this
plush game room into an elegant
viewing environment. Acoustic enhance-
ment is provided through the use of
soft appointments such as throw pillows
and rugs. The speakers are discreetly
integrated into the room
by way of flush-
mounting.*



The great unsung player in any home theater environment is the one component least likely to be upgraded: the room itself. Although it's usually the last thing to be considered (if it's considered at all) when putting together an entertainment center, the room in "media room" has to be considered with the same care one puts into choosing the gear for it. Good lighting, good acoustics and, above all, comfortable viewing conditions—these are the hallmarks of the best home theaters. The secret to setting up the perfect media room is to keep the three "P"'s in mind: placement, perspective and practicality.

Kim Michels, president of Electronic Environments, a New York-based media room design and consulting company and creator of many rooms pictured here, believes that the perfect media room is one in which form always follows function. "There is no such thing as the generic 'perfect' media room, because different people have different needs," says Michels. "Are there a lot of kids around? Is there a lot of tape dubbing done, or is it mostly a playback system? Each media room is an extension of the individuals that use it."

As is evidenced by the professionally designed media rooms depicted on these pages, the best setups emphasize both subtlety and convenience. There are certain thematic elements in each of the installations; note how the natural character of each room is retained while still allowing components to look and sound their best. "There's really very little reason to have the equipment in a prominent sightline," says Michels. "Nowadays, most equipment is operable by remote control, so there's no need to have the room overwhelmed with flashing lights and whatnot."

One thing that *should* be in a prominent sightline is, of course, the screen. "I always try to arrange the room around the screen," says Michels. "It's easy to move speakers and components around, but the main attraction is always going to be the monitor. And the optimum viewing distance is always going to be dependent on the size of the monitor. Having a huge projection TV close to the seating area may be



an exciting experience for 15 minutes, but after an hour or two, it becomes overwhelming and difficult to watch. When setting up a room, plan for the minimum viewing distance and work your way backward from there."

According to Michels, the mundane details that are unlikely to garner much attention, such as cables and placement, really do make a big difference. "Bad wire causes more problems than almost anything else I could name," Michels says. "Always use the best possible cables, and when the system is being set up, all pieces of equipment should have enough wire slack so that they can be removed from their space for servicing. And to make life much easier for yourself, be sure to label all the wires!" In addition to using good quality cables, Michels strongly recommends isolating equipment from any light dimmers or fixtures that have a motor of any sort. "They'll definitely pick up interference," he says, "which will translate into noise and hum. I make sure that equipment is on a separate AC line from anything that could cause problems."

As for the acoustic properties of the room, videophiles are finding out now what audiophiles have known for years: Hard surfaces in the room can cause problems. "Room surfaces like glass and marble can be a nightmare," Michels says, "because these hard surfaces make the sound bounce around. If you can avoid these materials, do so by all means. If the room already has a lot of windows or hard surfaces, try to soften them up by bringing in things like rugs, drapes and upholstery. If that's impractical, an audio equalizer will solve the problem."

Once the components and seating have been properly arranged in the media room, there are ways of making the picture look better and the sound more real. "The ability to control the lighting situation in the room is most important," offers Michels. "A projection TV usually needs a darker room, and if there are a lot of windows or a skylight, you need to be able to correct that. As far as improving the sound quality, I like to put a center-channel surround speaker behind a projection screen. There's usually a



Above and left: Now you see it, now you don't. For a truly hidden effect, nothing beats a front-projection setup. The projector is hidden in a lift that stows away in the ceiling.

Below left: Economizing space is often a consideration when setting up a media room.

Vertical stacks not only take up the least amount of room, but allow placement inside an attractive piece of furniture.

Below: an exercise in effective equipment racking. If equipment is to be stacked, be sure to keep each piece's rubber feet intact, to provide for adequate ventilation. If space is tight, allow air flow and heat buildup to escape through the rear or top of the enclosure. And always remember to place amplifiers at the bottom of the stack.





Above left: An extensive A/V setup needn't take up extensive space. Here, a complete control and monitoring center covers less than 10 square feet of wall space.

Above right: In-wall setups can also become the visual centerpiece of a room, without overwhelming it. A simple playback and monitoring system can be as minimalist as the decor requires.

Below: The practicality of this design is exemplified in the convenient pull-out racks that contain the equipment. Each separate piece of gear is accessible by pulling a single handle, with all rear connections within easy reach.



black border at the top or bottom of the screen, which I'll perforate slightly. With a center-channel speaker right behind, the sound literally jumps off the screen, just like in a movie theater."

Although some of the media room designs pictured here may seem like elaborate work (and some of them are), putting together a media room needn't be an extravagant affair. According to Michels, simplicity is always the key. "My credo is that you shouldn't have to be an astronaut to operate your A/V system," he says. Both the components and the room are serving a common purpose, and functionality should always be the defining quality." Simplicity, functionality, convenience. With qualities like these, a media room is bound to become the most popular room in the house. □

CREDITS

Page 34: room designed by Cheryl Jamo. **Page 35:** room designed by Babs Rieff, installed by Audio Command Systems. **Page 36 (top right):** room designed by Debbie Habicht and Ivan Dolan, installed by Audio Command Systems. **This page (top left):** room designed by Kenneth Walker Interiors, installed by Audio Design Associates. All of these above rooms photographed by Phillip Ennis. All other rooms designed and installed by Electronic Environments, New York, NY, photographed by David Sabal, courtesy of Kim Michels.





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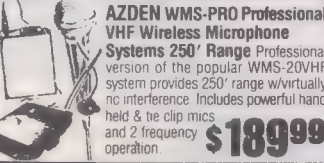
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THE HONOR ROLL



1990 ViRA NOMINEES

Batman, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and—surprise—*A Fish Called Wanda* may have broken records at video stores during the past year, but where do they stand among our critics' choices of the year's best video releases? We'll soon know, as we prepare for the final round of balloting in the Ninth Annual ViRAs—the Video Review Awards—the only major critics' awards in the video field and the highest national accolades of video excellence since 1981.

To be eligible for a ViRA, a title must have been released on videocassette or videodisc between January 1 and December 31, 1989, and reviewed in *Video Review*. In the first round of voting, each of our regular critics was provided with a list of all the titles that received four- or three-star reviews in *VR* during the past year. The critics then voted for three titles in each of 19 different categories, or cast write-in votes for titles not listed. These votes were tabulated to determine the finalists in each category.

All of *VR*'s critics will vote for their final choice in each category by secret ballot. The winners will be announced in the spring at a gala ceremony in Los Angeles, and will receive the coveted ViRA statuette at that time. A full report on the ceremonies and a complete list of the winners will appear in our May issue. Here, then, are the nominees:

BEST DRAMA

Bird (Warner)
A Cry in the Dark (Warner)
Gorillas in the Mist (MCA)
The Last Temptation of Christ (MCA)
Rain Man (MGM/UA)



Gorillas in the Mist

BEST THRILLER

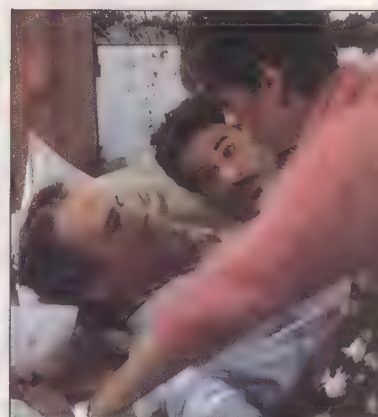
Dead Ringers (Media)
Dead Calm (Warner)
The Mephisto Waltz (CBS/Fox)
Miracle Mile (HBO)
True Believer (RCA/Columbia)



The Presidio

BEST ACTION-ADVENTURE

Dead Bang (Warner)
Die Hard (CBS/Fox)
Lock Up (IVE)
The Presidio (Paramount)
Tequila Sunrise (Warner)



A Fish Called Wanda

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE OR COMPILATION

Bambi (Disney)
Cartoons for Big Kids (Turner)
The Land Before Time (MCA)
Tex Avery's Screwball Classics II (MGM/UA)
Daffy Duck's Quackbusters (Warner)

BEST HORROR MOVIE

Child's Play (MGM/UA)
Lair of the White Worm (Vestron)
Parents (Vestron)
Suspiria (Magnum)
They Live (MCA)

BEST SCI-FI OR FANTASY MOVIE

Alphaville (Connoisseur)
Bad Taste (Magnum)
Batman (Warner)
Who Framed Roger Rabbit (Touchstone)



Batman and Who Framed Roger Rabbit



BEST FOREIGN- LANGUAGE MOVIE

Au Revoir Les Enfants (Orion)
Babette's Feast (Orion)
Salaam Bombay! (Virgin)
Wings of Desire (Orion)
*Women on the Verge of a
 Nervous Breakdown* (Orion)



Au Revoir Les Enfants

BEST COMEDY

Big (CBS/Fox)
Bull Durham (Orion)
A Fish Called Wanda (CBS/Fox)
Heathers (New World)
Married to the Mob (Orion)

BEST CLASSIC MOVIE

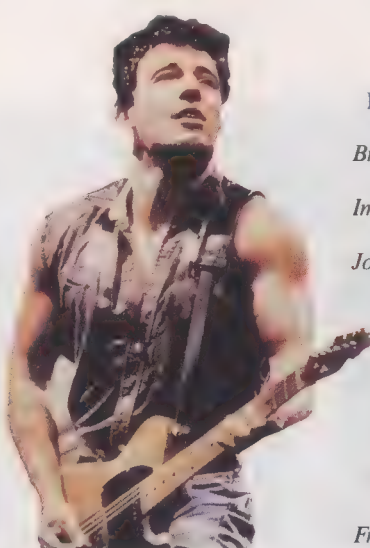
Gone with the Wind—50th
 Anniversary Edition
 (MGM/UA)
Lawrence of Arabia [restored
 version] (RCA/Columbia)
*The Life & Death of Colonel
 Blimp* (Criterion Collection)
Sullivan's Travels (MCA)
The Wizard of Oz—50th
 Anniversary Edition
 (MGM/UA)



Lawrence of Arabia

BEST VINTAGE TV

Dark Shadows, Vols. 1-4 (MPI)
The "I Love Lucy" Collection,
 Vols. 1-4 (CBS/Fox)
Peter Gunn Programs (Rhino)
Star Trek: The Cage [restored
 color version] (Paramount)



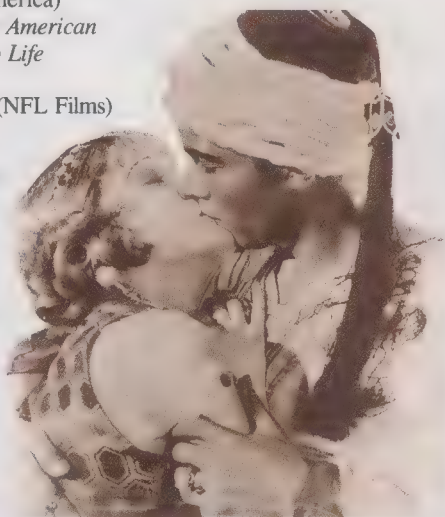
Bruce Springsteen Anthology

BEST SPORTS

*Ball Talk: Baseball's Voices of
 Summer* (J2)
The Baseball Time Capsule
 (Cabin Fever)
Grand Slam (VidAmerica)
*Mickey Mantle: The American
 Dream Comes to Life*
 (Media)
Team of the Decade (NFL Films)

BEST SERIES OR COLLECTION

*Betty Grable Col-
 lection* (Key)
*Buster Keaton—A
 Hard Act to Follow*
 (HBO)
*Eight Busby Ber-
 keley Musicals*
 (MGM/UA)
Hollywood (HBO)
*Six Gene Autry
 Westerns* (Western
 Heritage)



Hollywood Series

BEST COMEDY PERFORMANCE

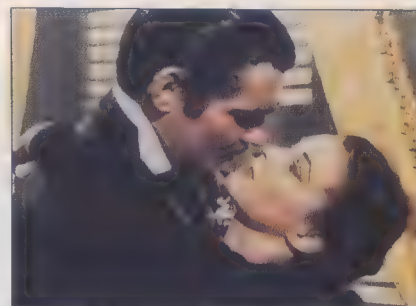
The Best of Eddie Murphy
Saturday Night Live
 (Paramount)
Bette Midler's Mondo Beyondo
 (HBO)
Gabe Kaplan as Groucho (J2)
Murphy's Laws of Golf (Fries)

BEST MUSIC—ROCK OR CONTEMPORARY POP

*Bruce Springsteen Video
 Anthology* (CMV)
Imagine: John Lennon
 (Warner)
*John Lennon and the Plastic
 Ono Band: Live Peace in
 Toronto* (HBO)
Robert Cray Live
 (PolyGram)
Tom Waits: Big Time
 (Fries)

BEST MUSIC—JAZZ OR CLASSIC POP

*Frank, Liza & Sammy— The
 Ultimate Event* (Kodak)
*Mabel Mercer: Forever and Al-
 ways* (V.I.E.W.)
Nancy Wilson at Carnegie Hall
 (V.I.E.W.)
Satchmo (CMV)
*The Unforgettable Nat King
 Cole* (MPI)



Making of a Legend: Gone with the Wind

BEST DOCUMENTARY

*Dear America: Letters Home
 from Vietnam* (HBO)
Hotel Terminus (Virgin)
*The Making of a Legend: Gone
 with the Wind*
 (Turner-MGM/UA)
The Thin Blue Line (HBO)
*You Can't Get There from
 Here: Ephemeral Films
 1946-1960* (Voyager)

BEST KID VID

*Barney and the Backyard Gang:
 Backyard Show* (Lyons Group)
Carnival of the Animals (Twin
 Tower)
Classic Fairy Tales (FHE)
Squiggles, Dots and Lines
 (KidVidz)
Turn on the Music (Hi-Tops)

BEST HEALTH OR FITNESS

*How to Stop the One You Love
 from Drinking and Using
 Drugs* (Paramount)
*Jane Fonda's Complete Work-
 out* (Warner)
*Kathy Smith's Pregnancy Work-
 out* (Fox Hills)
Shape Up with Mary Hart
 (Avon)

Jane Fonda's Complete Workout



BEST MUSIC—CLASSICAL

*The Bolshoi at the Bolshoi: The
 Nutcracker* (Spectacor)
First Ladies of Opera (VAI)
The Lady of the Camelias
 [ballet] (Kultur)
Madama Butterfly
 (London/PolyGram)
*Mahler Symphony No. 8—
 Leonard Bernstein* (Deutsche
 Grammophon/PolyGram)

BEST SPECIAL- FEATURES DISC

Casablanca (Criterion
 Collection)
For All Mankind (Voyager)
Show Boat [1936 version]
 (Criterion Collection)
West Side Story (Criterion
 Collection)

LIVING WITH SATELLITE TV

Adding a dish didn't just mean more channels.
It meant that home video
would never be the same again.



Justifying the installation of a satellite dish, the theoretical ultimate in home video, to my inquisitive neighbors and boob-tube-wary relatives takes some doing. Consider the conditions: In my neighborhood, 27 flat miles from New York City—where the 1,377-foot-tall World Trade Center, with its spiraling antenna, is visible from the nearby beach—broadcast TV reception is strikingly good. The local cable TV service probably ranks a little above average in terms of reliability and selection. Drive five minutes in any direction and you'll pass several major video stores. To most minds, buying a satellite system in this environment would be something of an extravagance.

Still, the lure of superior audio/video quality along with broader, lower-priced programming proved too strong to resist. The cost seemed prohibitive, but I figured that with my "technical background," I could save a bundle by installing the equipment myself. Honestly, had the actual installation not been such an invigorating challenge, I might not have gone through the trouble.

At this early stage (as I write, the system has been up and running for about a month), the work put into this particular satellite system overshadows its aggregate programming and performance benefits. But that's probably because it's new. Based on the minimal initial changes in the viewing habits of myself and my family, it will likely take a year before all the work and expense really pay off.

Installing a satellite system brought me face to face with the essential home-video enthusiast's dilemma: Does the hardware exist to support the software or does the software exist to show off the hardware? While I'd always found the first proposition more appealing, my indoctrination into the world of TVRO (satellitespeak for television, receive-only) increased my appreciation for the second. In fact, it seems impossible to describe how enjoyable it is to use the system without first explaining how it all goes together.

Before anyone decides to put up a satellite dish, there are a few potential problems that must be addressed (see "Five Steps to an Easier Installation," page 45). First off, local governments can

get funny about dish ownership—and not ha-ha funny, either. Once I got past the legal hurdles and into the installation process, other surprises awaited. Suffice it to say that you should make sure you have all the instructions, all the parts, all the tools and all the help you can find. It's a far more involved process than building a swing set.

In the beginning, the satellite system comprised eight large, heavy boxes on the garage floor. After resisting the initial impulse to unpack and get a look at everything, I decided to deal with the dish first. The 10-foot Winegard CK-1088 perforated antenna (\$895 list price) came highly recommended, and in an enormous carton. As I lugged its eight pie-shaped sections, including its mount, over to an open space for assembly, I began to understand why local authorities wanted to see plans before they would approve an installation. It's huge. It's unwieldy. And it could easily drop in on your neighbor's place if the wind was right and your mount was wrong.

Interestingly enough, some consultants had recommended an even larger dish for my location. The satellite belt (a.k.a. the Clarke Belt) runs east to west across the center of the US. Moving farther away from the sweet spot, somewhere in northern Oklahoma, means buying a bigger dish. Here in the New York metropolitan area, a 10-footer is essential for good performance—though an 11- or 12-foot model might be a little better. Pictures pulled in from western satellites, which are often quite good, still appear noticeably weaker than those drawn from eastern ones.

A major factor in assembling the dish and its support structure is setting the latitude: In other words, making sure that the dish tilts toward the Clarke Belt. On the Winegard dish, that meant making two adjustments to a latitude of roughly 41°N. Winegard recommends fine-tuning one of the bolts once the system is operating.

With the dish fully constructed and the neighbor's bull terrier less than impressed, work began on the mount. I rebuilt our 80-year-old garage roof two summers ago, yet I felt more comfortable mounting the big bowl and its heavy support structure on the ground.

Ground installation required two weeks of planning, building, tree-clearing, measuring, cursing and rebuilding. Roof-mounting might

By Gregory P. Fagan



Illustration: Chris Spollen

SATELLITE TV

have taken an eighth of that time, but I only realized that afterward.

Neither the manuals accompanying the equipment nor the local library's how-to section provided any suggestions for hoisting the dish and its support structure onto the mount—which should be a major concern for those considering similar projects. My brother came by to help, and we managed. But without a pair of 12-foot ladders, a steel support beam and a few years' experience in rigging and construction, we might have busted the dish and our backs.

After the dish was in place and vaguely pointed toward the satellites, the initial wiring began. Bolting the Drake 50° LNB (low-noise amplifier/block downconverter, \$125) onto the Chaparral Polarotor I feedhorn (\$75) took little effort. This assembly goes at the end of the arm, or buttonhook, facing into the center of the dish. Here, all the signals that bounce off the dish surface reflect into the feedhorn and through the LNB (see "Satellite TV: Back in Orbit," July '89 *VR*). The LNB has a conventional RF (radio frequency) antenna output that runs directly to the rear of the satellite receiver (some 150 feet away). A trio of low-voltage electrical wires run from the Polarotor to the receiver as well, and these turn the probe within the device's throat in order to pick up either odd or even channels.

Once I had run the wires for both the LNB and the feedhorn through the hollow buttonhook, it all went together rather easily. Assembling the actuator arm, a large piston that actually moves the dish through its east/west arc, proved a far more challenging exercise. Since Drake makes the actuator arm and Winegard makes the dish, the method for connecting one to the other is apparently left to the installer. After a bit of trial and error, I set it up correctly.

A second group of low-voltage wires run from the 24-inch Drake actuator arm (\$136) to the Drake APS-1024 antenna positioner (\$109), a tissue-box-sized component that sits atop the receiver. I later found out that the actuator came wired for a type of installation different from mine. It took a call to Drake's Ohio service center, which was very helpful, to find this out.

For the final steps of the installation process, I followed a veteran's advice and brought the receiver, positioner and TV set outside to the dish. Then, with a screen full of static and Winegard's instructions in hand, I loosened the bolts affixing the support structure to the mounting pole and rotated the dish a tad to the right. I had a picture in moments (to my horror, a shopping channel), so I tightened all the

bolts, lugged the stuff back inside and watched television.

I decided to set up a home theater in the basement as the primary viewing area, so I installed my Drake ESR-1224 IRD (integrated receiver/descrambler, \$1,144) and antenna positioner there. In this house, however, the other three sets upstairs get as much, if not more, use. I wanted to have access to the dish signal at every set, which is where one of the satellite receiver's key features—UHF remote

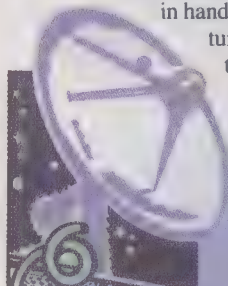


Drake's ESR-1224 Integrated Earth Station Receiver.

control—proved invaluable. Thanks to this capability, the IRD and antenna positioner could remain in the basement with lines running to each of the primary and secondary viewing areas. And, while a few steps in the IRD's start-up instructions require users to push front-panel buttons, all typical viewing functions can be operated via the component's remote control.

This setup isn't without its drawbacks, however. When viewing satellite TV on one of the upstairs sets, family members tend to forget to turn off the IRD's power. This installation also made it a little more difficult to take advantage of the IRD's data output, which connects the IRD to an InfoCipher decoder and a personal computer for on-line information services (such as stock prices). I could theoretically run a line upstairs to the PC in order to exploit this feature, but that kind of total info system is not really a necessity around this house.

Once all of the equipment was in place, the IRD's extensive 36-page owner's manual turned into a technical treasure map. Better IRDs, like this one, contain far more interactive computer circuitry than other video components. Almost every press of a button brings a corresponding on-screen reaction. Users can set fine-tuning parameters for each channel, key in names for channels, select up to 30 favorites for "priority viewing" and assign codes to block children's access



TV SHOWS FROM SPACE

Several system owners warned me that most of the "good stuff" bounced off satellites needs to be unscrambled by the VideoCipher II process, and required a subscription. But, before a dish owner subscribes to premium (such as HBO, Showtime, ESPN) and/or basic (MTV, CNN, USA) cable channels, there's still enough TV to satisfy most viewers. In fact, undemanding viewers may be able to survive on free satellite TV alone.

For instance, on a typical afternoon, the New England Sports Network (NESN) provided coverage of Candle Pin Bowling matches—which are to bowling what Canadian football is to the NFL. Players hurled heavy softball-sized spheres down the lane at 10 white pins resembling paper towel tubes. The competitors seemed very relaxed.

Meanwhile, over on the Midwest Sports Channel, the equally relaxed *Life in the Fit Lane* hostesses described exercises and eating habits that will help viewers live just like them. Then it was time for that way-out *Almost Anything Goes*-inspired game show on the Telemundo network, *La Feria de la Alegria*. That loosely translates from Spanish as *Mirth Market*, and it's easy to see why.

After all that *Alegria*, a brief tour past the five or so satellite shopping channels proved sobering. I soon escaped to Canada's Muchmusic video channel, where relief—a sprightly

Peter Gabriel/Youssou N'dour duet followed by a gritty rocker from the Tragically Hip—awaited.

Next, it was time for the news. News operations such as CBS, ABC and CNN use satellites to send footage to affiliates and to hook up live interviews from such locales as Washington, DC. These feeds suddenly appear on blank channels, entirely removed from the typical news-show context. You see and hear the interviewee, but none of the questions. The basic elements of the evening newscasts are there—video-taped reports without an anchor's introductions and voice-overs—but none of the polish or commercials. I rather enjoy anchorless news, and it's refreshing to watch congressmen, senators and other professional interviewees staring blankly into the camera, waiting for their turn to speak.

While all this free stuff is fun, it's worthwhile to invest \$300 to \$500 yearly on programming. In my town, the cost for similar service from the local cable operator would run 15 to 20 percent higher—and such channels as TNT and BET are not even available here on cable—but they are on satellite.

By the way, if you're considering a dish and IRD system to expand your viewing choices, add a subscription to one of the satellite TV programming guides to your budget. Tracking more than 100 channels at a time can numb the mind faster than a Brady Bunch Christmas Special. —G.P.F.

SATELLITE TV

to stations *and* programs. The menus are plain and easy to follow.

Pure exploration characterized the first few weeks' viewing—we didn't watch a single show through for fear of missing something better on another channel. And we'd yet to subscribe to any of the scrambled programming (premium movie channels, for instance). As skeptical as it sounds, I wanted to be a little more familiar with the mechanics of it all before I began to rely on it for pay TV.

The IRD's built-in VideoCipher II decoder circuitry is quite a wonder. Each decoder has an address, a serial number. After a viewer subscribes to programming services (such as HBO, ESPN and CNN), his or her code is included in the outgoing signal that's bounced off the satellite. The IRD recognizes its code in the incoming signal, activates the VC II descrambler and tunes in the signal perfectly. Since the programmer has the subscriber's number, so to speak, it can leave little notes on the screen for the viewer. Currently, this electronic air-mail system is used for messages about bill payment and announcements on programming. But it's within reason to see this as the tip of an interactive-TV iceberg.

Once we decided to pay for a few services, we began to feel isolated from the local community. We needed to subscribe to a satellite magazine to help track the programming. We had to shop around for programming that everyone else on the block either accepted or rejected. What's more, we began to develop a fondness for watching news feeds and other transmissions not intended for public viewing. We frequently graze through the channels just before dinner to intercept reports beamed from, for example, CBS's San Francisco affiliate to its New York headquarters. This, coupled with the fact that we'd ordered nearly everything available on local cable, plus a few services not offered here, at roughly 25 percent of the cost (\$365, paid up front), made us TV insiders.

But for now, TVRO has had its greatest impact on *how* we watch, rather than on *what* we watch. From all four rooms, remote control is handled by the UHF remote (model RCU1224U) included with the 1224 IRD, and I expect that we'll wear out the buttons in a year. (A simplified E-Z View infrared remote [model 2531] came with the package, but it only works downstairs in the home theater setup.) Unless there's a good movie on that we'd missed when it played the theaters, we'll skip off to another channel or satellite in search of something else (see "TV Shows from Space," page 44). Taking in the live feeds from the floors of both the British and Canadian

Parliaments, for example, proved quite engrossing.

I've discovered a lot of cool things about satellite TV, but it doesn't come cheap. There's usually some room for play within the dif-

ferent price ranges. This is partly because, according to several manufacturers, a good IRD's software can be upgraded much like a personal computer's. In other words, the \$1,250 model can be virtually identical to the \$1,600 model, except it's a few computer chips short. PC users usually foot the bill for software upgrades, and so



Winegard's 10-foot perforated dish antenna.

ferent price ranges. But I was able to find a model with enough pizzazz for my needs without reaching for the top of the line.

But all that could change. As I suggested earlier, satellite dish ownership seems fairly organic to this newcomer. First you learn a lot about the technology; and then you learn even more about the world of television. I'm already contemplating ways of wiring the house to take advantage of the IRD's digital sound (dozens of radio services bounce programming off the satellite as well). As with laser discs and CDs, small bites tend to increase the appetite. Today a 10-foot dish is fine. Tomorrow, I may crave a 16-footer that could be aimed far enough east for European TV. Next week, who knows? I'm merely resigned to the fact that absolute video corrupts absolutely. □

Former VR senior editor Gregory P. Fagan is the editor of World Screen News and a contributor to Playboy.

FIVE STEPS TO AN EASIER INSTALLATION

• **Civilian Engineering**—Check out all of the local rules governing dishes. Some localities insist that a ground-based dish must be a permanent structure—and defined as one in the government records. Roof mounting may necessitate an architect's sign of approval. (Insurance companies need someone to blame, should the saucer blow through a neighbor's window.)

• **The Installment Plan**—Each component comes with instructions, but questions regarding the placement of equipment and running of wires call for intense preparations. After four days' work, for example, our dish fell 2° shy of its necessary angle off the eastern horizon. Our wire also proved inadequate for the load, requiring replacement. Previous experience would have saved us the extra day's labor and 70 bucks' worth of materials, but better groundwork would have sufficed.

• **The Buddy System**—While one person can manage about 90 percent of the installation tasks, some operations call for a second or third pair of able hands. In our installation, positioning the dish and its backup assembly—approximately 180 pounds of rigid framework and delicate mesh screen—called

for some pretty fancy rigging. It's also best to use two people when running wires.

• **Tools of the Trade**—At various apparent impasses, we needed to either borrow or buy: a chainsaw (tree limbs blocked the signal path), an RF crimper (to crimp more than a dozen F-connectors), a carpenter's level and protractor (for setting the elevation angles), a reliable compass (to find true north), 3/8-inch rope (to steady the dish during positioning), sawhorses (to prop up equipment), an eight-foot extension ladder (two would have been great), a three-pound hammer (for aligning the mount) and galvanized guy wire (to anchor the base, among other things).

• **Tricks of the Trade**—Check off all the nuts, bolts, washers and other supplies against the manifest. Rigging the dish to its mount requires delicacy; we built a temporary support above the mount and lowered the dish in with ropes. Using guy wire to strap the carpenter's level to surfaces as we adjusted them probably cut our leveling time in half. Finally, set up a portable TV with the IRD at the base of the dish for final positioning. It makes matters much easier.

—G.P.F.



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WEST

BY JEFFREY LYONS



Guns ready: Brynner, McQueen, Buchholz, Bronson, Vaughn, Dexter and Coburn are *The Magnificent Seven* (above).

Guns blazing: Newman and Redford in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (right).

When I was growing up in a middle-class, liberal, Jewish family in New York in the late 1940s and early '50s, western movies were my passion. My father, a well-known Broadway columnist, had introduced my three brothers and me, in person, to Hopalong Cassidy, then the reigning television star and the lead rider in the annual Thanksgiving Day parade which lined up outside our home each year.

Meeting "Hoppy" (actor William Boyd) and hearing him remember my name from year to year was on a par with meeting no one else, except Joe DiMaggio (I'm also a baseball fanatic). Maybe it was the allure, the danger, the chance to act tough and the reassurance that the good guys always won that made me a fan of westerns so early in my life. Or maybe, in those simpler times, the good-vs.-evil plots were so clear, so obvious, and the outcomes so just. What kid knew back then that those movies often had racist undertones with regards to Indians and blacks, and also nearly always placed women in secondary roles? Simpler times, if not necessarily better times.

It wasn't just Hopalong Cassidy westerns that I loved. A

local independent TV station regularly ran the low-budget B westerns that had been churned out in the '30s and early '40s by such studios as Monogram and Republic. So I grew up on the exploits of Lash LaRue, Sunset Carson, Johnny Mack Brown, Tex Ritter, Bob Steele, Red Barry, Rex Allen and my favorite, Robert Livingston of "The Three Mesquiteers."

Many of these old westerns, each looking pretty much like the others, are now available on video. While I wouldn't dream of putting such routine fare on an all-time list of great westerns, I mention them to underscore my lifelong fascination with the genre and to indicate that they predate such TV western series as *Gunslinger* (the finest TV western of them all), *Have Gun, Will Travel*, *Tales of the Texas Rangers*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Bonanza* and many others. Indeed, until I was six, I was probably the only kid on the West side of Manhattan who answered to the name of "Tex" and never went anywhere without my two six-shooters. How the world has changed!

But now, on to the 10 western movies (in no particular order) that I think should be the heart of any home video western collection.

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BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID (1969)

The title roles were originally offered to, respectively, Marlon Brando (who looks vaguely like the real Butch) and Paul Newman. But Brando's turndown and then one by Steve McQueen led to Newman's switching roles, and made a superstar out of Robert Redford. This is a movie of style, wit and friendship in the face of adversity, with two characters who never take themselves seriously. The movie's sepia tones also give it an astonishing aura of authenticity. And I can't forget George Furth's wonderful portrayal of Woodcock, the loyal railroad employee who periodically appears, refusing to open the door of the money gang, saying, "I work for Mr. E.H. Hariman of the Union Pacific Railroad." Directed by George Roy Hill. (CBS/Fox cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc)

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (1960)

No actor has ever played a slimy bandito with the skill that Eli Wallach displays in John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven*. And if you're ever at a party where someone dares you to name the title players of this rip-roaring western, start with Brad Dexter to impress them. Then move on to Horst Buchholz. Only then should you mention Charles Bronson, Steve McQueen, James Coburn, Robert Vaughn and Yul Brynner. There's a great line in this wonderful movie that I'll always love. Wallach, as Calvera the bandit, cannot believe that the good gunfighters, whom he'd kicked out of his Mexican village without killing them (professional courtesy), have returned in force. Just before he dies, he asks: "You came back? To a place like *this*?" While *The Magnificent Seven*'s ultramacho tone seems a bit overdone by contemporary standards, this adaptation of Akira Kurosawa's Japanese samurai tale, *The Seven Samurai*, remains enormously exciting. (MGM/UA cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc)

HOW THE WEST WAS WON (1963)

Although this one is nearly done in by too many cameos and the decision to film it in Cinerama (a clumsy, three-screen process of the day, whose residual vertical lines are still visible on video prints), this is still a magnificent telling of how the West was essentially stolen from Native Americans. The main story line follows the fate of the family of Karl Malden and his daughters (Carroll Baker and Debbie Reynolds), who,



CRITIC'S CHOICE

along the way, marry, respectively, a trapper (Jimmy Stewart) and a riverboat gambler (Gregory Peck). Eli Wallach makes a terrific heavy, and appearances by George Peppard, Walter Brennan, the ubiquitous Lee Van Cleef and even John Wayne (as Ulysses S. Grant!) almost turn everything into another *Around the World in 80 Days* spot-the-star-athon. But it's all worth the effort as we travel West from the Erie Canal to San Francisco. (MGM/UA cassette)

THE SEARCHERS (1956)

Just about everybody agrees that John Ford was the greatest western director of them all. Among all his classics (which include *Stagecoach*, *Red River*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Rio Grande*, *My Darling Clementine*, *Fort Apache* and *Sergeant Rutledge*) the one that stands out is *The Searchers*. It tells the deeply engrossing saga of John Wayne's search for his niece (Natalie Wood) after she's been kidnapped by Indians. Ford's choice of Monument Valley as a backdrop, the lilting background score and interesting supporting players such as Ward Bond, Jeffrey Hunter, Olive Carey and Ken Curtis all make this one a keeper. (Warner cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc)

HIGH NOON (1952)

Gary Cooper, who had actually been a cowboy before becoming a movie extra in the mid-1920s, won his second Oscar for playing marshal Will Kane in *High Noon*, directed by Viennese-born Fred Zinnemann. He got the role only after Gregory Peck, who'd just completed *The Gunfighter*, rejected the part of a determined lawman who has to face a quartet of killer gunfighters all by himself after the townspeople turn their backs on him. Grace Kelly (just getting started in movies), Lloyd Bridges, Otto Kruger, Katy Jurado, Thomas Mitchell, Ian McDonald, Robert Wilke, Sheb Wooley and Lee Van Cleef (the last four as the gunfighters) all help to translate Carl Foreman's simple yet noble screenplay into a masterpiece. And any kid who's ever had to face a group of bullies alone could muster some momentary courage from the memory of this movie. (Republic cassette; Criterion CAV disc)

LITTLE BIG MAN (1970)

Dustin Hoffman gives a superb performance in a movie which goes from reality to satire—and along the way dramatizes the plight of Native Americans in a way Hollywood has done only rarely (the most notable other example: *Cheyenne Autumn*). Faye Dunaway, who teaches Hoffman about some of life's finer things, and Jeff Corey as Wild Bill Hickok, are also memorable, along with Hoffman's prowess at quick drawing. Directed by Arthur Penn. (CBS/Fox cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc)

SHANE (1953)

For me, *Shane* remains one of the greatest westerns ever made. The cinematography of Loyal Griggs (which won him an Oscar) of the "Big Sky" country, the mystery surrounding the title character (Alan Ladd), and fine supporting players such as Van Heflin, Brandon de Wilde and Jean Arthur, give the movie its texture. But it's the rest of the cast that really makes it a classic. There's Elisha Cook Jr. (as the feisty homesteader headed toward his doom), Edgar Buchanan (the grizzled friend), Emile Meyer (the dastardly rancher hounding the



homesteaders) and Walter Jack Palance, as he was known back then (the stoic gunfighter and saddle tramp hired by the ranchers to kill the sodbusters). Palance gives one of the first great performances of his career. Indeed, there's a story that director George Stevens sprayed Palance with foul-smelling gunk so that when he first arrives in town, presumably after a long ride with no time for bathing, a sleeping dog gets one whiff, wakes up and slinks away in disgust. Add to that Stevens' in-



MICHAEL LANDON'S 10-BEST LIST

He's played an Olympic bedwetter, a prairie dad and a peripatetic angel, but Michael Landon is probably best remembered as Little Joe Cartwright on *Bonanza*, the TV western series that dominated America's Sunday-night viewing between 1959 and 1973. Conscious of his status as frontier icon, Landon graciously picked his favorite westerns for us despite the fact he has "absolutely nothing to plug at the moment," pausing only to note that his cinema debut—*I Was a Teenage Werewolf*—is still sadly unavailable on video. "I liked that picture," he laughs, "even though we did it in nine days for 80,000 bucks."

Here, in no particular order, is the West—Hollywood style—according to Landon.

SHANE (1953)

"As I recall, it was the first movie where they really blew the gunshots at you; they really rocked the theater. And I love when Jack Palance gets it at the end. Although if you look very closely, after he's dead, you can see his hand come up and grab his hat." (Paramount cassette, LV disc)

THE SHOOTIST (1976)

"A terrific movie all the way around." (Paramount cassette, LV disc)

RED RIVER (1948)

"Extraordinary performances; I'm always fascinated by Montgomery Clift, who's amazing in this." (Not available)

THE COWBOYS (1972)

"As opposed to a lot of people who seem to get very upset about it, I found total justification with the boys when they finally take over. It took me a long time to like Bruce Dern after this movie, and he's my neighbor." (Warner cassette)

BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID (1969)

"Great humor, beautiful look to it, and a lot of fun." (CBS/Fox cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc)

HOW THE WEST WAS WON (1963)

"The movie, not the miniseries. Just an extraordinary saga with great performers." (MGM/UA cassette)

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (1946)

"A beautifully done film with a great mood." (Playhouse cassette)

BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK (1955)

"I'd classify this as a western because it has all the elements. Plus it has Spencer Tracy, Lee Marvin and Robert Ryan, who are three of my favorite people, and probably the most satisfying fight scene I've ever seen." (MGM/UA cassette)

THE LEFT-HANDED GUN (1958)

"I found it a very interesting film, all because of Paul Newman." (Warner cassette)

SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON (1949)

"As pure a western as you can possibly get. If you like horses, aside from a good story and good performances, it's a great movie all around." (RKO cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc) —Steve Simels

Dustin Hoffman as Little Big Man (below); and Wayne and Hunter in John Ford's *The Searchers* (above).





JACK PALANCE'S 10-BEST LIST

Jack Palance has been busy lately—with villainous turns in *Batman* (opposite Jack Nicholson) and *Tango and Cash* (opposite Sylvester Stallone). He's also been working on a Japanese eco-thriller called *Solar Crisis*, which he assured us dryly "reads like a nice film."

Still, to western fans, Palance will always be best remembered for his matchless menace in *Shane* and his Mexican bandit in *The Professionals*. So we asked if he had a western 10-Best list and, as you'll see, he proved himself quite knowledgeable about the genre. But that knowledgeability didn't extend to his famous post-death hat-grabbing scene in *Shane* (see "Michael Landon's 10-Best List"); in fact, when pressed, Palance could only offer that "It's possibly true, I suppose." Ah, well.

What follows are Palance's western favorites, in chronological order.

THE VIRGINIAN (1929)

"I was a big fan of Gary Cooper, who was somebody special; he had a marvelous laid-back attitude. This had more of an influence on me than any other western I've seen." (KVC cassette)

STAGECOACH (1939)

"For all the people involved in it—including John Wayne and Claire Trevor—and the aura of

greatness, the feeling of something special happening." (Warner cassette)

DUEL IN THE SUN (1946)

"Just a beautiful film, filled with color." (CBS/Fox cassette)

HIGH NOON (1952)

"I don't know what I could add that audience reception hasn't already covered. Except, again, that Cooper's terrific." (Republic cassette)

WINCHESTER '73 (1950)

"Jimmy Stewart at his best—and Stewart is one of my favorites. Plus it has all the ingredients of a classic western." (MCA cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc)

SHANE (1953)

"For personal reasons, obviously, but I think it's just great. What [director] George Stevens was able to achieve with a minimum of action was phenomenal. I remember so many people at Paramount saying that it would be a dud, that Stevens would lose his shirt." (Paramount cassette, LV disc)

CAT BALLOU (1965)

"One of the reasons I like it is because of the drunken horse standing there with his legs crossed. Also, I like Lee Marvin very much." (RCA/Columbia cassette)

THE PROFESSIONALS (1966)

"Again, for personal reasons, but I think it's [director] Richard Brooks at his best." (RCA/Columbia cassette, LV disc; Image LV disc)

THE WILD BUNCH (1969)

"Sam Peckinpah, who directed it, was fantastic. This is probably my favorite of the whole bunch." (Warner cassette, LV disc)

ROOSTER COGBURN (1975)

"Where the hell else could you get a combination like John Wayne and Katie Hepburn?" (MCA cassette, LV disc) —S. S.

(in the only significant movie role of his career). Peck plays a tenderfoot sea captain who comes to Texas to marry the daughter of a rich rancher and winds up in the middle of a range war. The magnificent sweep of the photography, the glorious score by Jerome Moross and the dramatic confrontations with rival ranchers all combine to make this almost a Frederick Remington painting come to life. Peck, incidentally, did all the riding sequences himself, including a difficult scene atop a bucking bronco and a furious chase in a buckboard with Carroll Baker (who, at the time, was pregnant). In *The Big Country*, Peck is the most dashing underdog of all time, and his climactic confrontation with Connors crackles with excitement. (MGM/UA cassette)

GUNFIGHT AT THE O.K. CORRAL (1957)

Of all the westerns that have a Hollywood backlot look, none can compare with this one, which teams Burt Lancaster as Sheriff Wyatt Earp with Kirk Douglas as the tubercular gambler Doc Holliday. John Sturges' taut direction and a cast that includes Rhonda Fleming, John Ireland, a young Dennis Hopper and even Lee Van Cleef, stamp this version of the famous Earp-Holliday gunfight as strictly Hollywood, but still enormously entertaining. (Paramount cassette, LV disc)



Tying for tenth place are three quirky choices to complete my list. (Hell, I'm entitled, given the hundreds of westerns I endured as a child.) They are:

VERA CRUZ (1954)

Robert Aldrich's action potboiler has Burt Lancaster, grinning from ear to ear as if the proud possessor of 1,000 teeth, playing a sleazy gunfighter who initially signs on to help Emperor Maximilian stay on the throne of Mexico. Gary Cooper is his sometime ally, while a young Ernest Borgnine (the year before he won his Oscar for *Marty*), a young Charles Bronson (still billed as Charles Buchinsky) and John Ireland are among the gunfighters. (But no Lee Van Cleef this time.) Real hokey stuff, but lots of fun to see a hundred times over. (CBS/Fox cassette, withdrawn)

BLAZING SADDLES (1974)

Mel Brooks' classic belongs on the list, of course, as the best western spoof ever made. Cleavon Little has the best line when he says, "'Scuse me while I whip this out!" (If you remember the context, you'll understand.) And who can forget Harvey Korman as Hedley Lamarr or Slim Pickens or Alex Karras. I start laughing just thinking of this one. (Warner cassette, LV disc)

CALAMITY JANE (1953)

For my money, the best western musical—even better than *Annie Get Your Gun*. David Butler directed, Doris Day and Howard Keel co-star, and the songs by Sammy Fain and Paul Francis Webster (including the Oscar-winning "Secret Love") are first-rate. I've long felt this western should be re-created on Broadway. Anybody know a Broadway "angel" who'd like to co-produce it with me? (Warner cassette) □

Jeffrey Lyons is a co-host of TV's Sneak Previews Goes Video and a critic for CBS Radio and USA Tonight.

Douglas and Lancaster in Gunfight at the O.K. Corral (above). De Wilde, Arthur, Heflin with Alan Ladd as Shane himself (left).



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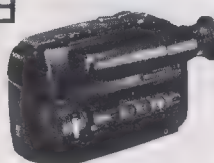
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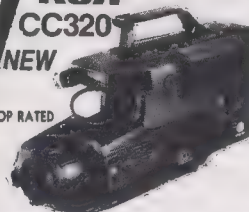
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RENTAL TAPES

PARENTHOOD ★★★

Steve Martin, Mary Steenburgen, Rick Moranis, Dianne Wiest, Tom Hulce, Jason Robards. Directed by Ron Howard. 1989. Rated PG-13. (MCA tape, 124 min., Hi-Fi stereo, DS, no list price, available Feb. 8) □

BY LEONARD MALTIN

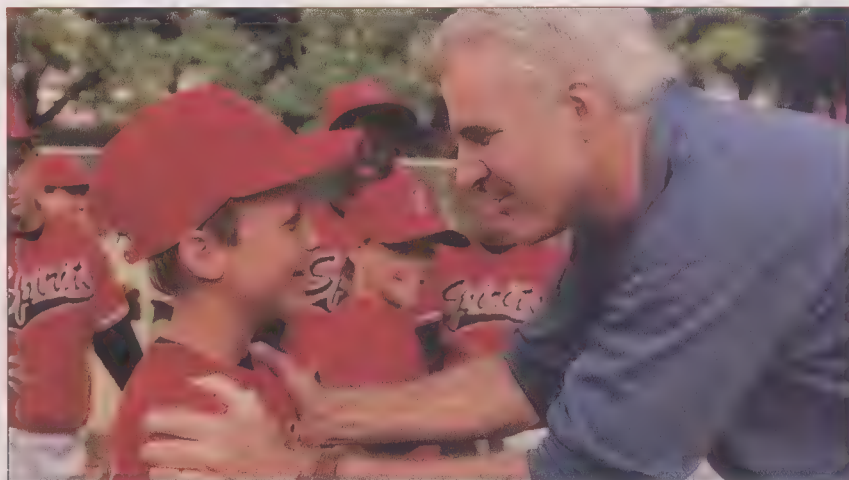
One day, I'm told, director Howard was sitting around with some longtime colleagues, writers Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel (together they fashioned *Night Shift*, *Splash* and *Gung Ho*). They began comparing notes on raising children and, before long, they had mined so much natural material that they simply had to write a script. That, I would say, is the main reason *Parenthood* is so good: The best comedy is always based on truth.

What gives this picture resonance is the fact that Howard and company weren't afraid to be serious as well as funny. They've concocted a multifaceted script about a large family with several generations of parents. It reminds us of everything from the pain of accepting responsibility for a child's development, to the fact that you don't stop being a parent just because your offspring become adults.

Martin may have had the biggest challenge in a stellar cast. Because he's still so firmly associated with comedy, it was incumbent upon him to bring a touch of humor to his character as a loving but harried Dad, without sacrificing believability. He manages to pull it off. What's more, he's surrounded by one of the finest ensemble casts in recent Hollywood history. Steenburgen, Wiest, Hulce, Robards, Moranis, Martha Plimpton and Keanu Reeves all get their chance to shine. In fact, my favorite single moment in the movie belongs to Reeves, who registers one of the great "takes" of all time, after delivering a most unexpected speech to an agonized Wiest.

When this movie played in theaters last summer, there was some flack from parents who'd taken their children and discovered (to their dismay) that there was some very adult material in the script. I would encourage would-be video renters to heed this warning. *Parenthood* is a funny,

Parent Leonard Maltin is a regular on TV's *Entertainment Tonight* and author of the bestselling *TV Movies & Video Guide*.



Parenthood's Martin: not afraid to be serious as well as funny.

touching, thought-provoking movie that's aimed at parents, not their children. I suspect even non-parents (of parental age) will enjoy it.

TURNER & HOOCH ★★★

Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, Reginald VelJohnson, Craig T. Nelson. Directed by Roger Spottiswoode. 1989. Rated PG. (Touchstone tape, 99 min., Hi-Fi stereo, DS, \$89.95, available Jan. 24) □

BY ANDREW SARRIS

Turner & Hooch, combining the star power of Hanks as Turner and the poochy pathos of Beasley as Hooch, scored big grosses in its theatrical release. Now, on videocassette, it should provide an orgy of sentimentality for fanciers of the late '80s buddy-doggie police genre (such as *K-9* and *Lethal Weapon 2*).

Hanks plays a small-town California detective with an overly structured bachelor lifestyle. Hooch comes into his life as the only witness to the murder of his previous owner, and helps Hanks find the murderer. I won't give away more of the plot, since it involves a few surprises.

Most of the movie, unfortunately, is

Andrew Sarris is the movie critic of the *New York Observer*, professor of film at Columbia University, and author of *The American Cinema*, *Cinema and Politics*, *The Primal Screen* and other books.

concerned with the mutual domestication of man and dog, and Beasley, the rare European mastiff in the de Bordeaux subcategory, chews up all of the available furniture in sight as if he were the hammiest of hams—which he is with his scene-stealing slobbering. Hooch even has a girlfriend, as does Hanks' Turner (a female vet played as winningly as possible by Winningham).

Frankly, I hated the smugness and self-satisfaction of the Turner character. And a little bit of Hanks is beginning to go a long way with me. But I have to be objective for his legions of fans, and for people who love dogs without any reservations whatsoever. Forget about Rin Tin Tin, Lassie and Asta. *Turner & Hooch* is true love between man and beast.



Turner & Hooch: ham on wry.

ROE VS. WADE ★★★★★

Holly Hunter, Amy Madigan, Terry O'Quinn, Cathy Bates. Directed by Gregory Hoblit. 1989. (Paramount tape, 92 min., Hi-Fi mono, no list price, available Feb. 22)

BY MOLLY HASKELL

Made-for-television movies achieved some of their finest hours in *Roe vs. Wade*. That's not only the case title of the landmark 1973 US Supreme Court decision declaring a Texas anti-abortion law



Hunter as Roe: a made-for-TV landmark.

unconstitutional, but also a television landmark in dealing with a highly controversial issue.

What is most surprising about the directing, writing and acting in *Roe vs. Wade* is its restraint and intelligence. It avoids villainous caricatures and moral oversimplifications—so much so, in fact, that some pro-choice partisans have complained of a degree of pussyfooting on this painful issue.

The script by Allison Cross, the direction by Hoblit, and the lead performances of Hunter as "Jane Roe," a legal fiction,

but a flesh-blood-and-tears loser in the games of sexual life, and Madigan as the pro-choice Portia, bedeviled by an insidious sexism in every facet of her personal and professional life, manage to dramatize a traumatic social issue without lapsing into self-righteous hysteria or programmed paranoia.

Most commendable of all is the dignity and pathos with which O'Quinn makes the judicial case against abortion on demand. Vulnerable to the slings and arrows of public opinion as both a man and a bachelor moralizing on a "woman's" dilemma, O'Quinn brings a rueful irony to his characterization that lingers in the mind long after he has left the courtroom.

The lack of self-esteem in the abortion-seeking Hunter character contrasts with the self-controlled academic assurance of the Madigan crusader to form the same class tensions as there were between the Jodie Foster rape victim and the Kelly McGillis upscale assistant district attorney in *The Accused*. The limited female bonding in *Roe vs. Wade* is comparatively less sentimental and less covertly erotic.

Ironically, even as *Roe vs. Wade* is be-

ing commemorated on network television and now on videocassette (without interruptions for TV commercials), the decision itself is in jeopardy of being overturned, especially during the presidency of a pro-life advocate with the power to fill any forthcoming Supreme Court vacancies to his judicial specifications. Thus, this cassette release of *Roe vs. Wade* remains on the cutting edge of a major political struggle still being fought.

Some of the movie's biggest thrills come with a discovery of the full meaning of the word "born" in the Fourteenth Amendment, and the creation of new law on the precious but difficult-to-define right of privacy for womankind as well as mankind. *Roe vs. Wade* thus demonstrates that network television can be more intelligent about social issues, and infinitely more influential than the older theatrical medium ever was. The videocassette of this Emmy winner is a must for every thoughtful collector with a civic conscience.

Former Vogue movie critic Molly Haskell is the author of *Women in Film: From Reverence to Rape*.

SLEEPER OF THE MONTH

THE PACKAGE ★★

Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Tommy Lee Jones, John Heard. Directed by Andrew Davis. 1989. Rated R. (Orion tape, 108 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.98, available Feb. 22)

BY ED HULSE

The Package, an edgy little thriller offering no surprises but many satisfying elements, might seem a more remarkable movie had there never been *The Manchurian Candidate*, to which it bears remarkable similarities in plot and narrative structure.

A West Germany-based US Army sergeant (Hackman) is assigned to escort a "package"—a chronic miscreant (Jones) headed for court-martial—stateside. But when he loses his charge and is placed under arrest by his superior officer, Hackman enlists the aid of his ex-wife (Cassidy), herself a career soldier. She uncovers evidence suggest-

ing that Jones is a highly skilled assassin. To clear himself, Hackman escapes and pursues Jones, hoping to beat the hit man to his intended target.

Under Davis' capable direction, the story zips along at a pace that will certainly grip your attention, even if it doesn't bring you to the edge of your seat. Naturalistic dialogue and nicely understated performances (especially from Hackman and Cassidy) keep *The Package* from lurching, as it might easily have done, into the realm of florid melodrama.

Orion's video transfer accurately reflects the theatrical 35mm print. The muted colors and murky scenes you'll see on tape were present on big screens as well. The images are well cropped, and sound quality is particularly crisp, offering an additional dividend for viewers with stereo VCRs.

Ed Hulse is editor of *Previews* magazine and former host of TV's *Movie Mania*.



Hackman and Heard: in hot water over a lost Package.

ABOUT THESE REVIEWS

To parallel the viewing environment of most home viewers, VR critics normally review programs in their homes. Unless otherwise indicated: All tapes are SP; all LV discs are EP. All programs are in color unless marked B&W. □ indicates closed captions for the hearing-impaired; DS indicates Dolby Surround sound.

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Effective with this issue, reviews are organized in three sections: Latest Rental Tapes, Latest Collectible Tapes and Latest Laser Discs. Most rental tapes are also available for purchase. Collectibles (generally prices below \$30) may also be available in some stores for rental.



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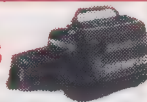
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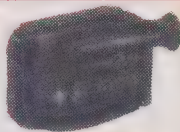
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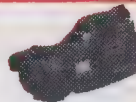
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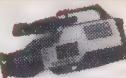
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NEW YORK STORIES ★★★

Nick Nolte, Rosanna Arquette, Talia Shire, Giancarlo Giannini, Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, Julie Kavner, Mae Questel. Directed by Martin Scorsese, Francis Coppola and Woody Allen. 1989. Rated PG. (Touchstone tape, 126 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$89.95, available Jan. 24)

BY MOLLY HASKELL

The sketch movie, with different directors contributing individual sections, is a showcase for individual talents rather than a narrative with a momentum of its own. This one works remarkably well—because Scorsese, Coppola and Allen decided to pool their talents and resources around the theme of New York.

Scorsese's *Life Lessons*, with Nolte and Arquette, strikes first and hottest in its savagely authentic portrait of a downtown painter—half macho, half masochist—and the woman who feeds his artistic frenzy. Arquette, as a young would-be painter, is just the latest, we come to realize, in a series of wide-eyed assistants whom the celeb artist lures into his loft and then involves in a sort of sado-masochistic ritual which fires him up to complete the paintings for his next show. The episode is harsh, unpleasant, even sexist (the implication is that only mascu-

line drive, masculine ego and masculine ruthlessness can produce a first-rate painter), but it is brilliant in its portrait of a genius son of a bitch and the world in which he operates. Nolte, playing a sort of cross between Norman Mailer and Jackson Pollack, is rude, bearish and believable, while Arquette is sulkier and more irritating than she has to be. Scorsese captures the sensuality and intensity of a large canvas painting, and, with a savvy screenplay by Richard Price, the coldblooded hustle of the SoHo art scene.

Coppola's *Life Without Zoe*, a sort of update of *Eloise at the Plaza*, offers a 12-year-old girl living alone, with butler, at the Sherry Netherland Hotel while her philandering flutist father (Giannini) and restless mother (Shire) travel the globe in separate directions. As this is from an adoring daughter's point of view, the father doesn't actually bed the women, he just casts spells on them with his flute. There are charming scenes in this poor-little-rich-kid fable, which is beautifully photographed and has some of the opulence and magic of a child's fantasy, though it never transcends its kiddie orientation.

In *Oedipus Wrecks*, Woody Allen has fashioned the ultimate Jewish-mother fable in the story of a 50-year-old lawyer (Allen) who is haunted and persecuted by his mother as she seeks to supplant his WASP



Mother lode: Allen hits close to home.

fiancee (Farrow) with a nice Jewish girl (Kavner). The early scenes with the mother (Questel), who won't let the sleeping dogs of her son's embarrassing childhood lie, are hilarious—and in his desperate attempt to flee her suffocating influence, Allen has never been funnier or hit closer to home. In the latter part of the movie, in which a disembodied Questel floats overhead haranguing her son with love, there's a falling off of comic energy. Perhaps it's the melancholy that results when Allen, unable to reconcile the two sides of his nature, surrenders in an ambiguous "happy ending."

The sense of New York as both place and psychological state emerges in all three tales, but, for me at least, the movie comes through best on the large screen.

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Still it is the human tensions and intimacies that are at the forefront, making this highly enjoyable on cassette.

WIRED ★

Michael Chiklis, J.T. Walsh, Patti D'Arbanville, Alex Rocco, Ray Sharkey. Directed by Larry Peerce. 1989. Rated R. (IVE tape, 112 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.95, available Feb. 8)

BY JEFF WEINGRAD

About halfway through *Wired*, the movie based on the book of the same title by Bob Woodward about the ugly final days of John Belushi, Belushi's widow, Judy, turns to Woodward (a character in the movie as well) and tells him she wants his book to tell it all—"the drugs and more." And that's the problem with this movie: the "more" is missing.

As in the book, drugs dominate every aspect of the story. If this were fiction, one might dismiss the effort as unbelievably heavy-handed. Belushi, the character, is simply worthless. Everyone around him means well but is thoroughly misguided. We get the point in the first 48 seconds.

But this is supposed to be reality—and the movie fails miserably as nonfiction. Scattershot flashbacks pass for a hip, artsy style but build no momentum or emotional groundwork for developing a meaningful portrait. There's a dark, forboding tone to the cinematography, but we never feel really involved. Forget the dialogue. Forget, too, the stuff out of sequence—such as Belushi rehearsing for a Conehead sketch for his first *SNL* appearance. It didn't happen.

The actors are not bad. But, fact is, the real-life Belushi and his cronies were far more than not bad. They were, the movie reports, the stuff of legends. Chiklis is good as Belushi, but when we see him in performance (in *SNL*-esque sketches devised for the movie, or in pale imitations of the fabled Blues Brothers), anyone who was around back then will want to scream *but noooooo!*

More to the point, Belushi in real life was someone who, like everyone else, was filled with faults—but also, like everyone else, had parts of him that people loved and respected. He was also a genius most of the world envied. None of this comes out in the movie. Watching it, you wonder why anyone would spend two minutes with the guy—or why anyone looking for the real John Belushi should spend two minutes with this *Wired*.

Jeff Weingrad is television editor of the *New York Daily News* and co-author of *Saturday Night: A Backstage History of Saturday Night Live*.

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THE SHOUT ★★ ★

Alan Bates, Susannah York, John Hurt,
Robert Stephens, Tim Curry. Directed by
Jerzy Skolimowski. 1979. Not rated.
(VidAmerica tape, 90 min., \$39.95,
available Feb. 8)

BY ANDREW SARRIS

The Shout made video history in 1980 as the first movie to be released on cassette before its national theatrical release, following a limited run in New York in 1979. (It also was the first movie I reviewed for *VR*—for its very first issue in April 1980.) *The Shout* came at the end of a decade when cinematic absurdism seemed to some to be the wave of the future. But the video release didn't find many takers and soon vanished from store shelves. Now, a decade later, VidAmerica has secured the rights and is re-releasing it.

On re-viewing, I find this strange, violent, sensual story worth recommending again to discerning lovers of the offbeat and the challenging. Based on a story by the British poet Robert Graves and directed by Polish emigré Skolimowski (*Moonlighting*, *Deep End*) from a screenplay by the director and Michael Austin, *The Shout* is anything but linear as it weaves in and out of a cricket match in an insane asylum and a bizarre series of events in a quiet coastal village in Britain. Bates plays a wandering storyteller who may or may not be lying about his magical power to shout loudly enough to kill all life around him. He imposes himself on a loosely married couple, terrorizes the husband, seduces the wife and upsets the quiet rhythms of the village. York and Hurt flesh out an odd triangle with physically insinuating gestures, movements and, most strikingly of all, casual nudity that had perhaps more shock value a decade ago than it does today.

The big problem for the random viewer lacking in curiosity and patience is the fragmented fashion in which Skolimowski develops the action. For one thing, it is never made clear at what level of reality or sanity the action is unfolding at any given moment. The only *raisonneur* in the movie is played by Curry (of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* fame) with little of the antic panache we have come to associate with him.

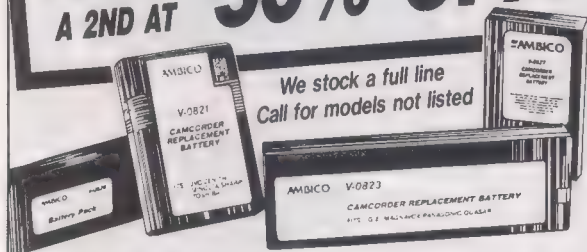
With all the stylistic and thematic mystification, there is never any buildup of suspense. Motivation in the conventional sense is nonexistent. We cannot care for anything or anyone we do not know for sure, and Skolimowski is determined never to give the audience a firm grasp on his narrative strategy. Still, *The Shout* remains a brilliantly articulated work of visual and aural art, and an ever-tantalizing puzzle for the cultivated video viewer.

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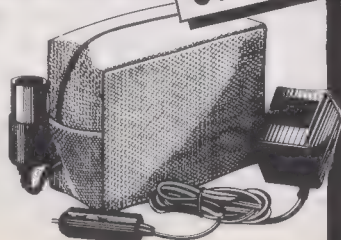
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**FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VIII—
JASON TAKES MANHATTAN ★★**

Peter Mark Richman, Kane Hodder.

Directed by Rob Hedden. 1989. Rated R.
(Paramount tape, Hi-Fi stereo, 96 min.,
no list price, available Feb. 15) □

**HALLOWEEN 5: THE REVENGE
OF MICHAEL MYERS ★**

Donald Pleasence, Ellie Cornell. Directed
by Dominique Othenin-Girard. 1989.

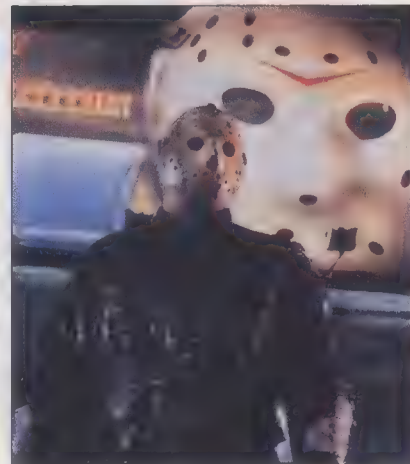
Rated R. (CBS/Fox tape, Hi-Fi stereo,
96 min., \$89.98, available March 1) □

BY DOUG BROD

Once a movie series hits its fourth sequel, it's safe to say the newest installment

is reviewer-proof. These movies aren't made to win awards, or even to entertain—as cynical as this may sound, they exist solely to make money; they're the true sure things. Such is the case with these two new adventures of every 15-year-old boy's favorite killing machines. And, not surprisingly, they're both fairly awful. But not for the same reasons.

The great thing about the *Friday the 13th* series is that each successive outing is essentially a remake of the previous one. *Part VIII* plays like a splatter-movie primer: the high body count (including the nasty harpooning of copulating teens); the crazy guy who warns, "This voyage is doomed"; the screenwriter's total dis-



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regard for the audience's intellect. I've sat through *Parts I, II, III* and *V* and would have to say that this new one isn't nearly the least of the bunch. (That's like saying Shemp wasn't the ugliest of the Three Stooges.) Nevertheless, writer-director Hedden keeps the pace quick and cinematographer Bryan England scores high marks for his crisp and colorful cinematography.

Not having seen *Halloweens 3* or *4*, I can't tell if *5* is the worst—but I'd be willing to wager that it is. Pretentious, boring and dark (you can hardly make out the action on a TV screen), its cheap way of creating terror is putting a small child in peril for 96 minutes. Also, in an attempt to fashion the series into a kind of splatter serial, the producers end the movie with an appallingly strained cliffhanger. It made me feel ripped off, and I didn't have to pay to see the thing. One amusing footnote, though: Mike Lookinland, a once and future member of *The Brady Bunch*, is credited with additional first assistant camera.

**SEE YOU IN THE
MORNING ★**

Jeff Bridges, Alice Krige. Directed by
Alan J. Pakula. 1989. Rated PG-13.
(Warner cassette, 119 min., Hi-Fi
stereo, DS, \$89.95)

BY JOANNA LANGFIELD

The always charming Bridges and pretty newcomer Krige are the central characters in this extended family drama that I'm tempted to call *fortysomething*. They are two well-heeled New York neurotics who each bring to their second marriage their own parcels of records, books, friends, relatives and children—plus tons of old psychological baggage that gets replayed in endless, nonsequential flashbacks. Unfortunately, the choppy flow of this burbling soap opera makes it as aggravating on video as it was in its limited theatrical run.

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BILLY CRYSTAL: MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO MOSCOW ★★★

Billy Crystal. Directed by Paul Flaherty. 1989. (HBO tape, 72 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$59.99, available Jan. 25)

BY NEAL GABLER

Watering the stalks in the vast cornfield that surrounds his California swimming pool, Billy Crystal, like another recent movie hero, hears an ethereal voice: "If you go there, take a jacket." It was the same injunction his grandmother used to give him when he was a boy, and Crystal realizes that her spirit is now enjoining

him to return to her native Russia for what Crystal calls "jokenost."

It's a daunting prospect for a comedian as verbal as Crystal—to entertain an audience of Russians who don't know that much English. But part of the appeal of this comedy special is the very fact that, thanks to Gorbachev, it exists. As Crystal tells the Muscovites, "We thought you were the enemy. You thought we were the enemy. We were wrong. It's the French!"

Interpolated between routines in Crystal's concert are some wonderful little bits: Crystal arguing with a vehement Russian about whether Zsa Zsa was guilty; Crystal

fantasizing about the kind of entertainer he might have become had his grandmother stayed in Russia; and (for my money the very best thing on the tape) Crystal playing an entrepreneurial guru who promises Gorbachev economic salvation by making an amusement park out of Lenin's mausoleum: Leninland. ("Lenin is your Crocodile Dundee," he says. "Everybody's gonna wanna put a shrimp on your barbie.")

Not all of the material is great. Crystal doing a Chaplin pantomime, for example, is too artful by half. But Crystal is a very gifted comedian in a blessed situation. Who could have predicted two years ago that an American would have Russians laughing at their own inept bureaucracy?

KICKBOXER ★

Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Alexio, Dennis Chan. Directed by Mark DiSalle and David Worth. 1989. Rated R. (HBO tape, 97 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.95, available Jan. 25) □

BLOODFIST ★★

Don "The Dragon" Wilson, Rob Kaman, Billy Blanks, Kris Aguilar. Directed by Terence H. Winkless. 1989. Rated R. (MGM/UA tape, 86 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.95, available Feb. 20)

BY MARK TROST

Whoever dreamed up the sport of kickboxing (a combination of boxing and karate) must have taken one too many blows to the head. And whoever thought kickboxing movies would be the next cinematic craze should be kicked one too many times in the head.

Similar in style and structure to the kung fu flicks of the '70s and early '80s, these two kickboxing movies are rife with grade-school acting and clichéd scripting. Die-hard fans, however, will surely prefer the far more interesting *Bloodfist*, which features four of the sport's most popular and talented competitors. There's also a plot twist or two along the way that most viewers will not have anticipated 10 minutes earlier.

The same can't be said for *Kickboxer*, which took three directors to complete (including star Van Damme, credited with helming the banal and derivative fight sequences). Overall it's a cross between *Rocky III* and *Karate Kid II*, with a circle-of-death final match that seems ripped from the third *Road Warrior* movie. And Van Damme's English is even funnier than early Schwarzenegger.

Longtime VR critic and B-movie specialist Mark Trost is the former producer of TV's Movie Mania.

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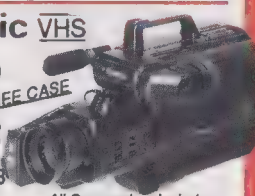
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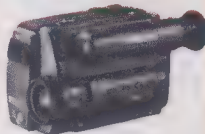
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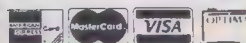


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EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS II: EDDIE LIVES ★

Michael Pare, Marina Orsini, Matthew Laurence. Directed by Jean-Claude Lord. 1989. Rated PG-13. (IVE tape, 106 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.95, available Jan. 11)

BY STEVE SIMELS

The original *Eddie and the Cruisers* was one of the more intriguing rock 'n' roll fictions ever filmed—and not just because of the oddball way it became a hit, via cable TV, after a failed theatrical release. True, it featured a pre-stardom performance by the incomparably erotic Ellen Barkin, which would have made it notable under any circumstances. But, more important, it lived up to a nifty premise: rebellious poet-rocker dies mysteriously at the height of his powers—or does he? At the same time, it said intelligent things about friendship, class distinctions, '60s idealism gone sour, and lots of other interesting subjects that seldom get treated in genre movies. You could sneer at its lapses into melodrama or its anachronistic hash of rock history—and a lot of rock critics have done just that. But, for me anyway, *Eddie I* had a crude poignancy that couldn't be laughed away.

The inevitable sequel, however, is an unmitigated disaster. It betrays everything good about the first movie through sheer fast-buck incompetence. For starters, the plot has all the imagination of the picture's subtitle; Eddie is, in fact, alive, and the only surprise is how he's grown up to look like a blue-collar Robert Goulet. All the other earlier characters are jettisoned, save for original Cruiser Laurence, whose love/hate relationship with his old bandmate, crucial to the first picture, is reduced to a desultory kiss-and-make-up walk-on. In place of mystery, the price of art or dreams betrayed, the focus now is on the most mundane of showbiz bio clichés—can Eddie still do it?

In short, *Eddie II* is done in by rotten acting, impossible dialogue, irrelevant music (John Cafferty's songs, so apt last time out, here seem utterly phoned in) and the least convincing concert footage since Neil Diamond's imitation of a lox in *The Jazz Singer*.

Steve Simels also writes for Stereo Review.

THE KARATE KID PART III ★★

Ralph Macchio, Noriyuki "Pat" Morita. Directed by John G. Avildsen. 1989. Rated PG. (RCA/Columbia tape, 111 min., Hi-Fi stereo, DS, \$89.95, available Jan. 24) □

BY GEORGE MANNES

It's easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys in this third installment in the *Karate Kid* series. Good guys treat karate as if it is ballet, and they open stores to sell beautiful bonsai trees. Bad guys punch defenseless women in the stomach, maliciously break bonsai in half and make

millions by dumping toxic waste.

Don't worry if you haven't seen the first two *Karate Kid* movies; you'll catch on quickly enough. Bad guys, previously humiliated by Daniel (Macchio), goad him into another tournament so they can get their revenge. The plot of *Part III* is about as complex as its characters.

Macchio rushes through his lines so fast you'd think he was running to catch a train. Morita's maxims are lost in a thick accent and a fuzzy soundtrack.

Karate Kid III's values are simple, the pictures are pretty and the actual fighting scenes aren't too nasty. It's the characterizations that will beat you senseless.

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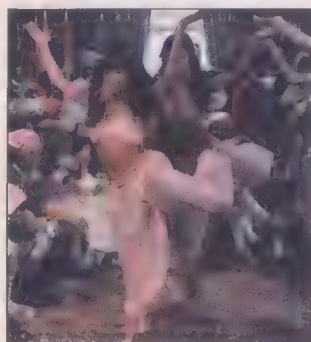
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MASTER OF DRAGONARD HILL

Oliver Reed, Herbert Lom, Eartha Kitt. Directed by Gerard Kikoine. 1987. Rated R. (Media cassette, 92 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95, now available)

Trust the British, notably soft-core producer Harry Alan Towers, to come up with their answer to the US's *Mandingo* series, relocating the slave trade



Finding thrills on Dragonard Hill.

(essential for this type of exploitative period-piece potboiler) to the West Indies. Towers and director Kikoine, who previously teamed for Tony Perkins' *Edge of Sanity*, load the movie with copious stabbings and nudity and, as per that pic, give rather lavish treatment to degenerate material. As *Dragonard's* blustery corrupt governor, Reed, frighteningly ruddy in every one of his scenes, seems always on the verge of exploding. Bordello owner Kitt is her usual Catwoman self, and Lom, as a treasure-seeking pirate, trots in about two-thirds of the way through to contribute some decent comic relief. Leave it to the young American protagonists to add nothing to the enterprise but obscene vapidity. (Doug Brod)

DEAD PIT

Cheryl Lawson, Jeremy Slate, Steffen Gregory Foster. Directed by Brett Leonard. 1988. Rated R. (Imperial cassette, 95 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95, now available)

Here's one zombie movie that's actually fun. It's about time; horror

flicks have become so distressingly mechanical it's a chore to sit through most of them. The lively *Dead Pit* opens with Lawson (who displays ■ precariously ripe figure in most of her scenes) interred in a funny farm where the spirit of a long-dead malevolent medico has been released, along with the ghoulish remains of his former patients, to seek revenge on Slate, the colleague who killed him. Director Leonard doesn't miss a trick: eerie lighting effects, tilted camera, wide-angle lenses—it's like watching the work of an A-student in Horror Film 101. There are some draggy spots, but they don't last long. And neither do most of the characters. (Ed Hulse)

THE NIGHT VISITOR

Elliott Gould, Allen Garfield, Michael J. Pollard, Shannon Tweed, Richard Roundtree, Derek Rydall. Directed by Rupert Hitzig. Rated R. 1989. (MGM/UA cassette, 94 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95, now available)

Top-billed (not to mention haggard and hirsute) Gould is afforded around 15 minutes of screen time in this oddity directed by the guy who produced the excellent fright flick *The Wolfen*. Quintessential *shlubs* Garfield and Pollard play middle-aged brothers/Satan-worshippers who sacrifice prostitutes in their rituals. (Quicker than you can ask, "Where's Henry Gibson to complete this oddball troika?" guess who shows up in an uncredited cameo?) The derivative story is boy-who-cried-wolf fare with voyeuristic high-schooler Rydall trying to prove his history teacher (Garfield) is a murderer. Aside from a few fun scenes with the aforementioned "big" names and a brief (but

full-bodied) appearance by Playboy-Playmate-turned-omnipresent-B-movie-hooker Teri Weigel, this terror tale is strictly ho-hum.

(Doug Brod)

GOODNIGHT SWEET MARILYN

Paula Lane, Misty Rowe, Jeremy Slate. Directed by Larry Buchanan. 1976/1988. Not rated. (Off Hollywood cassette, 100 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$89.95, now available)





BEYOND THE DOORS

Gregory Allen Chatman, Riba Meryl, Bryan Wolf. Directed by Larry Buchanan. 1986. Not rated. (Unicorn cassette, 117 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95, now available)

Director Buchanan is best known for his dreadful color remakes of inept-to-begin-with AIP B&W '50s cheapies. These movies—*Zontar, the Thing from Venus*, *The Eye Creatures* and the immortal *Mars Needs Women* among them—are endlessly fascinating and disorienting, particularly if you know the original versions they rip off practically shot for shot. Buchanan has since become something of a conspiracymonger, and these two recent works—one on the demise of Marilyn Monroe, the other positing ■ Nixon-initiated CIA plot to do away with Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison—are just as querulous as anything he's ever done.

Of the two, *Beyond the Doors* (previously titled *Down on Us*) provides more entertainment value, most of which stems from the movie's unbelievably cornball portrayals of its rock-star protagonists. A particular

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highlight is the early meeting of Hendrix (Chatman) and Joplin (Meryl), in which the guitar whiz exclaims, "You are ridiculously out of sight, lady!" Also amusing is the fact that no matter where ■ concert is supposedly taking place—Amsterdam, London, Miami—it's clearly always the same cheesy set. The budget limitations really contribute an awful lot to the movie's enjoyability, and since the producers couldn't afford the rights to the real music of its protagonists, hired guns created some truly mind-numbing imitations. For all his earnestness, though, Buchanan still respects the traditions of exploitative moviemaking—always wary of his audience's flagging attention span, he throws in ■ shot of ■ topless woman every 10 minutes or so. Buchanan clearly expects the audience to take his conspiracy theory seriously, but he can't even get the most rudimentary facts straight—here he casts Hendrix's Woodstock rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" in the dark (Jimi actually played it at dawn) and portrays the quasigroupie Plaster Caster cult as British (they were from Detroit).

Goodnight Sweet Marilyn is just as bad, but not as much fun. Splicing around an hour's worth of footage from his 1976 *Goodbye, Norma Jean* (which depicted Monroe's early years) into an account of the sex bomb's last days, the movie is just too slowly paced to be engaging. The scenes in which Marilyn confronts her dead mother are pretty wry, though, and Paula Lane's portrayal of a bloated, bovine Monroe easily reaches the far side of appalling. Among the exciting observations on MM included here is the immortal pronouncement that she "attracted gays like moths." (Glenn Kenny)



The Night to fight Satan: a bloodied Gould and unbowed Rydall.

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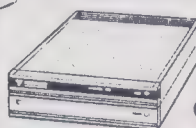
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INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE ★★★★★

Harrison Ford, Sean Connery, Alison Doody. Directed by Steven Spielberg. 1989. Rated PG-13. (Paramount tape, 127 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$24.95, available Feb. 1)

BY RICHARD SCHICKEL

Indiana Jones is, I think, one of the figures by which history is going to define the 1980s. His Stetson is already in the Smithsonian, and his bullwhip seems sure to follow. Unlike, say Ronald Reagan's jellybeans or Jane Fonda's leotard, these

Ford, Connery: completing a hat trick.



While his *Last Crusade* dad Sean Connery is most associated with one legendary screen character, Harrison Ford has had the good fortune (or perhaps misfortune) of being the incarnation of two latter-day cinema icons: Han Solo (of the *Star Wars* series) and Indiana Jones. VR's Glenn Kenny caught up with Ford after a Paramount screening of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* to get a few pertinent thoughts from the usually laconic Ford.

VR: *Crusade* director Steven Spielberg has referred to this movie as his apology for Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom [the second in the series]. Is it that way for you as well?

FORD: Well, this movie progresses the character of Indy more than that one did. I recognize the *Temple* problem, though. I think it was a reasonable attempt to stretch, and to take audiences to

are the symbols of unalloyed delight—no pain, all gain. For Indy, in Harrison Ford's delightfully crabby characterization (no one ever more vividly projected the put-upon quality of a superhero's life, the sense that it is, inevitably, one damned dangerous thing after another), reminded us of the best in our heroic tradition.

Indy's archeological quests were not for wealth, they were for the symbols of our spiritual longings. His enemies were not routinely sordid spies or drug smugglers of the typical action-adventure movie. They were much more self-consciously evil figures, generally Nazis as witty as he was—and equally clear about the ideological value to their black cause of, for example, the Holy Grail, which is the object of everyone's desires in *Last Crusade*.

This latest movie is further enriched by another sweeter, more comedic and more psychologically basic sort of conflict: between Indy and the father from whom he has been estranged for years, but to whom, of course, he must prove himself. The great Sean Connery is wonderful in this role—stern, absent-minded, full of gumption.

It is part of the grace of these movies that, though they are rooted in a rich layer of subtext, they are never grounded by it. They are quick of tongue and even quicker of foot. Their chases and cliffhangers depend for their effectiveness not on massed forces or huge expenditures of TNT. They are all sleight-of-hand, state-of-the-art editing—a grabbing hand, a slipping foot, a hidden weapon revealed in one nanosec-

HARRISON FORD, RELUCTANT ICON

the darker side of the genre. But it came out too dark. Of all the Indiana Jones movies, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* is the one that's least accessible to kids.

VR: *George Lucas has said that this is it for Indiana Jones movies. Given the physical demands these movies make on you, are you relieved?*

FORD: No, I'm not, but I am ready to move on to somewhere else. The physical demands aren't a problem, but genre movies don't really have too much ambition.

VR: *When doing these action-oriented movies, where do you draw the line on what you yourself will or won't do as far as stunts are concerned?*

FORD: It's a semantic distinction, so bear with me. I don't do stunts, I do physical acting. The real stunts I leave to those who are supposed to do them.

ond, surmounted or dispensed with in the next—and, quick, before Indy (or the audience) can grab a breath, on to a new peril, a fresh menace. This is technique pushed to its limits, and I love the movie-makers' showoff confidence in their own skill—and their confidence in our ability to speed-read their intentions.

Indeed, I think that, taken as a whole, the *Indiana Jones* series represents Spielberg at his best, striving neither for sentiment nor for importance—just cheerfully, unpretentiously demonstrating his mastery of the movies' utterly basic, utterly unique ability to propel us heedlessly through time and space, enlisting our sympathies mainly through a rush of imagery rather than a rush of words. And I think this last installment in the popular series, made with the same care, conviction and energy as the first, but orchestrating the elements of a delicious formula at a still higher level of sophistication, may well be the best of his best.

The standard cassette edition which I viewed has been panned and scanned with great care. A letterboxed version for purists is also being made available by Paramount in the Super VHS format (and will be reviewed in a later issue of VR as soon as a copy is made available—Ed.). A laser disc edition is being released by Pioneer LDC in both letterboxed and panned-and-scanned versions. One caution: Whichever you select, try to play it on the best available sound system. The drive and power of John Williams' score, not to mention the brilliant effects track, are integral to the success of this movie and cannot be properly appreciated on just the usual TV speaker.

Richard Schickel is a movie critic for Time and the author of Schickel on Film, The Stars, The Men Who Made Movies, Selznick and other books.

VR: *How much fun was it to make Last Crusade as opposed to Raiders of the Lost Ark?*

FORD: On a scale of one to 10, this one was about 8.5. *Raiders* was an 8.45.

VR: *You're known as being resistant to doing interviews.*

FORD: My problem with interviews is that, especially if you're asked about your private life, the truth unspoken is the truth, and the truth spoken is a lie. But you [in the press] help us sell movies, and we help you sell magazines. You choose to do it or not. I'm a profit participant, a businessman. It's in my interest that this movie does well.

VR: *Now that the door is closed on the Indiana Jones series, is there any talk of another Star Wars movie?*

FORD: Not in my house.

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INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE ★★★★★

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Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Joss Ackland, Patsy Kensit. Directed by Richard Donner. 1989. Rated R. (Warner tape, 114 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$24.98, available Feb. 8)

Lethal Weapon 2 is the sort of movie that sends brow-furrowing critics racing to their typewriters to lavish praise on small, serious pictures like *sex, lies, and videotape* and lament the decline of Western civilization. Beginning with the riff from Looney Tunes under the Warner Brothers' shield, *Lethal Weapon 2* certainly doesn't purport to be Bergman's *Persona*. It's a sprawling cartoon of a movie from the Chuck Jones school with Gibson and Glover reprising their roles as mismatched cops—one goofy and reckless, the other straight and cautious. And as action pictures go, it is one terrific movie: smart, hyperkinetic, funny and savage. If anything, it may even surpass the original, which was a damn fine movie in its own right.

REVIEWS



and the Last Crusade) gives us the contemporary equivalent of the Nazis. These blokes are so purely evil, so coolly malevolent in their Aryan arrogance, that you not only want to see them murdered, you want to see them drawn and quartered. It's a great engine for a movie, and when you add a series of set pieces clearly designed to goose the audience, you get a cathartic experience from a picture that manages to be fast without also being too loud and bloated.

Yes, it's preposterous. And a romance between Gibson and the beauteous secretary of a diplomat (Kensit) is clearly perfunctory. And maybe the villains don't get Veg-O-Maticked as gorily as they deserve. But I have a feeling that long after more self-consciously serious pictures have become period curiosities, video audiences will still be cheering on Gibson and Glover. *Lethal Weapon 2* has got the formula down right.

Directed by Malcolm Leo. 1987.
(MGM/UA tape, 97 min., Hi-Fi stereo,
\$19.95, available Jan. 30)

Start with the title. Why survey 20 years of rock'n'roll in 1987, when this rock-doc was put together? Rock'n'roll, as some of us recall, began in 1954 or thereabouts. What began in 1967 was *Rolling Stone* magazine itself, which has been claiming suzerainty over the music ever since. So while the exposition does include references to Elvis et al., it also implies that San Francisco's so-called Summer of Love, which also took place in 1967, was a

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rock'n'roll watershed. And with that as a starting point, it delivers *Stone's* usual boring rock-as-idealism myth.

To present an hour and a half of meaningful history on such a scale would be no mean feat. This tape simply isn't up to the job. Sure, the snippets of performance visuals can be truncated fun. But most of them are lifted from more worthwhile releases, including *Monterey Pop*, *Woodstock*, *Soul to Soul*, *Sympathy for the Devil*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *The Last Waltz*, *Stop Making Sense*, The Paul Simon and USA for Africa videos, various promos, and on and on.

The original material consists of interviews with a predictable panoply of stars and "survivors." Shot against tinted backdrops, these tend to be platitudinous and canned-looking. The big offenders are Grace Slick, a bad civics teacher; George Harrison, a simpleton; and Robbie Robertson, an even bigger windbag here than he was in *The Last Waltz*. Others are merely useless, or just adequate.

Only sarcasm addict Randy Newman and a surprisingly candid and irreverent Jerry Garcia provide consistent insight or entertainment value. Major-domo Dennis

Robert Christgau is the author of Christgau's Record Guide. Carola Dibbell writes for the Village Voice.

Hopper, alternately shaky and zombie-like in a wrinkled suit and tie, reads his lines like he needs the money. And the lines themselves, credited to newly discovered rock historians Peter Elbling and Steve Muscarella, lack even the zing one anticipates from *Stone's* resident pundits.

Dilettantes looking for a painless way to absorb a toothless myth—well, as they said in the '80s, "go for it." Music fans, draw your own conclusions.

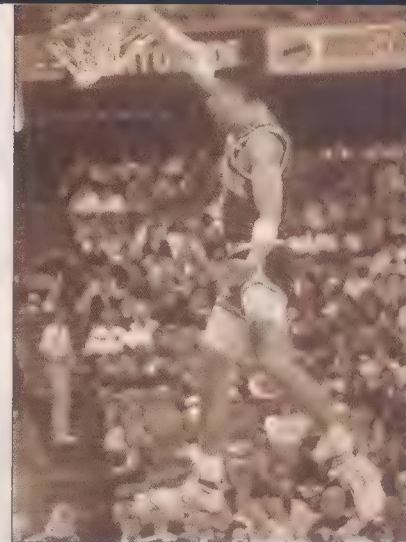
AWESOME ENDINGS: GREATEST MOMENTS IN THE NBA ★★

Compilation featurette. Directed by Charlie Bloom. 1989. (CBS/Fox tape, 45 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$14.98, available Jan. 18)

BY DAVE ANDERSON

Pro basketball's running gag is that nothing happens until the last two minutes. But that longtime theory is upstaged in much of this videotape when everything happens in the last two seconds. Instead of overdoing dazzling dunks, the footage displays some of the NBA's most memorable buzzer baskets, several from beyond midcourt.

But more important to any pro basketball fan with a sense of history are the



Another Awesome dunk.

solidly researched segments featuring the NBA's finest hours: the '70 Knicks' seventh-game upset of the Lakers after Willis Reed hobbled onto the court despite a damaged knee; the '76 Celtics outlasting the Suns in triple overtime; Magic Johnson and the Lakers dominating the '80s in their title-round duels with Larry Bird and the Celtics; Isiah Thomas of the Pistons scoring 16 points in the final 93 seconds of regulation time in an eventual

Dave Anderson is a sports columnist for the New York Times.

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'84 play-off loss. John Havlicek's steal of a 76er in-bounds pass that preserved the '65 Celtics' conference triumph; the Celtics' reign of 10 titles in 12 years with Bill Russell at center; Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's dominance for both the Lakers and the Milwaukee Bucks; and the frustration of Jerry West and Elgin Baylor in an earlier Laker era. During an All-Star weekend interlude, Bird is also seen swishing three-point shots.

If there's too much Lakers and Celtics, it's only because history demands it. And because every NBA fan demands it.

JANE FONDA'S WORKOUT: LIGHT AEROBICS AND STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM ★★★

Jane Fonda. Directed by Sidney Galanty. 1990. (Warner tape, 65 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$29.98, now available)

BY JENNIFER STERN

Or should that title be "lite"?

Fonda's latest *Workout* program is the first featuring the new, improved Jane: post-Tom Hayden and post-plastic surgery. She looks great, as does the tape, which has the fine production qualities characteristic of all her tapes.

It's the content that's a bit, well, light-

weight this time. Though it begins with a well-designed, moderately vigorous 20-minute aerobics program—mostly low impact—the last 30 minutes are devoted to stretching and 10 minutes of relaxation/meditation. Now, I don't know about you, but if I'm going to devote 30 minutes out of my day to my body, I'm going to want to do more than stretch it and relax it. Maybe that's a typical Type A, East Coast attitude (this tape definitely smacks of laid-back California)—or maybe Jane is getting a bit less serious in her new ageless age.

After all, it was a pretty heavy responsibility being the standard bearer for wearing your wrinkles proudly at 50—especially for someone with the body of a 20-year-old. Now *sans* wrinkles and *sans* some 180 pounds of husband, she definitely seems to have lightened up. Maybe that's good news for her, but not for those seeking a more comprehensive workout.

PIPPY ON THE RUN ★★★

Inger Nilsson. Directed by Fred Ladd. 1977. (VidAmerica tape, 96 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$19.98, now available)

BY GENEVIEVE A. KAZDIN

Pippi's back. The Swedish live-action series has recently been rereleased by

VidAmerica in clean new transfers. Perhaps this red-headed charmer will stay around for a while. Kids from six to 12 will love her, as will parents who enjoyed Astrid Lindgren's books.

Pippi, for those who may have missed her, is an unrelentingly independent, outrageous nine year old. She lives alone and has breathtaking adventures. When told it's impossible to ride on a broomstick, she retorts "I know, but the broom doesn't!" as she flies away. She lives her life without adults and shows the barest tolerance for them. No need for Pippi to be tucked in at night, or to be hugged.

In this program, Pippi helps her neighbors, Tommy and Anneke, run away—with their mother's permission. They travel through the woods, hitch a ride on a train and fly in a convertible. Eventually Pippi brings Tommy and Anneke back home, happy from their adventures but glad to be back.

Pippi is the embodiment of childhood fantasies. It doesn't matter that the special effects here pale compared to the effects we are used to, nor that the dubbing is less than perfect. Pippi's sheer *joie de vivre* and *chutzpah* make her a wonderful fantasy heroine and role model.

Genevieve A. Kazdin specializes in children's books, TV and video.

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LAWRENCE OF ARABIA ★★★★★

Peter O'Toole, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quinn, Omar Sharif. Directed by David Lean. 1962; restored 1989. (Four Criterion discs, CAV, digital stereo, DS, 217 min. plus untimed supplementary material, \$124.95, now available; two Criterion discs, CLV, digital stereo, DS, 217 min. plus untimed supplementary material, \$69.95, now available; two RCA/Columbia discs, CLV, digital stereo, DS, 217 min., \$49.95, now available)

BY DAVID HAJDU

"The box is okay," admits Sir David Lean, referring to TV in the supplementary section of one of the three disc versions of his masterwork, *Lawrence of Arabia*. Then, turning to an enormous theatrical film screen behind him, he says, "This is what the movie should be shown on."

Who am I to argue with the genius behind *Lawrence of Arabia*? Certainly the sheer scale and sweep of this magnificent

movie epic are best served on a theatrical screen the size of a good warehouse. In fact, some of the characters in many scenes look so small on the home screen (even on my 30-inch monitor) that it's sometimes difficult to be sure who they are or what they're doing.

The problem is heightened by letterboxing, adopted on all three of these disc releases. While the technique is essential to retain Lean's rich compositions, most of which fill the entire widescreen dimensions with visual ideas, letterboxing requires a severe reduction in the height of the image on TV sets. This movie just wasn't made to be shrunken so much.

Nevertheless, *Lawrence of Arabia* is a movie to be seen over and over, to be treasured as the genuine classic it is—and for repeated viewings over the years, collectors are going to want it on video. They won't be too disappointed with any of these new disc versions. All three are of the restored version, reconstructed in the late '80s with final approval by Sir David. The

color on all three is exquisite. The restoration includes about 20 minutes cut shortly after the initial world premiere of *Lawrence* in 1962—about 10 minutes of it removed without Lean's knowledge.

It's nice to know this footage is back. And it's fairly easy to find it on the two Criterion pressings, each of which includes a booklet identifying every restored sequence, chapter by chapter (although



Sharif, O'Toole: *The desert's now on disc.*

frame numbers for the start and finish of each restored sequence are missing and would have been enormously useful). Still, casual viewers should be warned that some of the restoration might not seem like such a big deal. For example, the point in Chapter 3 when a couple of seconds have been added to a camera tilt, or the point in Chapter 15 where a straight cut has been changed to a dissolve. Sharp

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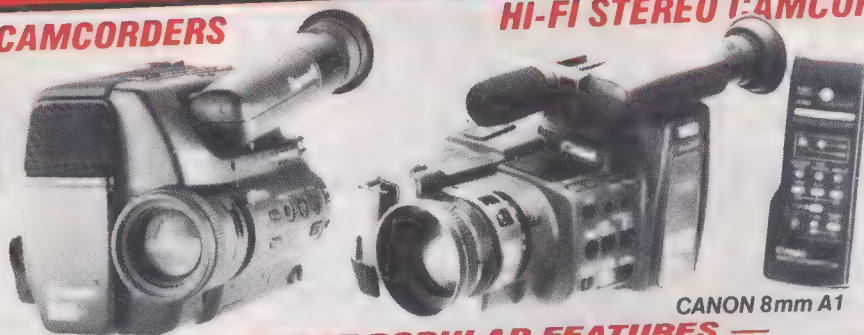
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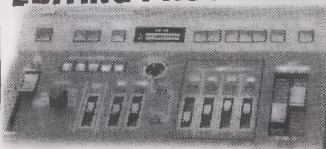
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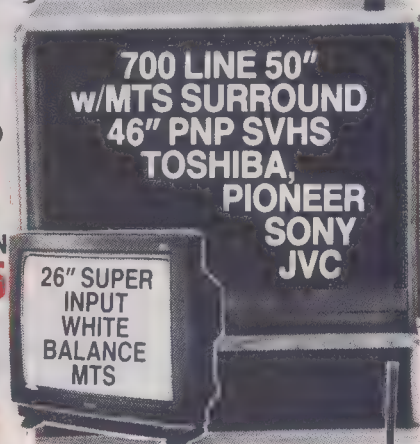
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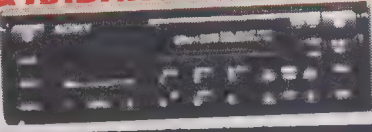


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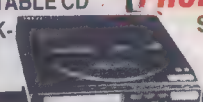
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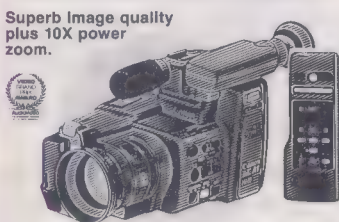
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listeners, however, should be able to detect where Guinness and others redubbed lines where the original soundtrack was lost.

There are a few notable differences among these three releases:

Criterion's CAV version, an eight-sided set with the full-feature capabilities of CAV, is the edition for cinema fanatics (like me), who love to spend hours deconstructing a movie's editing technique, frame by frame. They'll also enjoy the collection of behind-the-scenes still photos added as supplementary material.

Criterion's CLV edition includes four chapters of supplementary material: (1) a brief and fluffy promotional short about the movie, called "Wind, Sand and Star"; (2) newsreel footage of the 1962 premiere; (3) some silent and largely unenlightening footage shot behind the scenes during the production; and (4) a short scene of David Lean at the New York premiere of the reconstruction in 1989, during which he made the comments quoted above.

RCA/Columbia's CAV version is similar to Criterion's (and taken from the same master), but includes no supplementary material. It is, however, close-captioned for the hearing impaired.

JAZZVISIONS: ECHOES OF ELLINGTON, VOL. 1 ★★

Roger Kellaway, Tom Scott, Pete Jolly, Bill Evans, Dianne Reeves, O.C. Smith. Directed by Sandi F. Fullerton. 1987. (PolyGram CLV disc, 60 min., \$24.95, now available; Verve tape, 60 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$19.95, now available)

JAZZVISIONS: RIO REVISITED★

Antonio Carlos Jobim, Gal Costa, Paulo Jobim. Directed by Louis J. Horvitz. 1987. (PolyGram CLV disc, 60 min., \$24.95, now available; Verve tape, 60 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$19.95, now available)

BY ROY HEMMING

These are the first two programs in a series being released simultaneously by PolyGram and its affiliates on videodisc, videocassette, audio CD, LP and cassette. The audio customers will be happier than most videophiles. The digitally recorded sound is excellent on all five editions, and the musical performances are great. But the cinematography (taped during live concerts at Los Angeles' Wilton Theater) is strictly routine and often boring.

The Ellington program comes off best on video, thanks to some fascinating close-up shots of pianists Kellaway and Jolly (the latter wrongly listed as a saxophonist on the jacket), clarinetist and saxist Scott and singer Reeves. But the camerawork (or direction) too often focuses on people when they're not playing

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The following titles, reviewed in VR in their videocassette editions, are now available on laser disc. The listing below includes title, disc label and price, date of VR's cassette review, our star rating and the reviewer's name.

Batman, Warner, \$39.98 (Jan. '90, ★★★ Sarris)
Betty Grable Double Feature: Springtime in the Rockies & Song of the Islands, CBS/Fox, \$49.95 (June '89, ★★★ Hemming)
Great Balls of Fire, Orion/Image, \$39.95 (Dec. '89, ★★★ Christgau & Dibbell)
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Paramount, \$29.95 (March '90, ★★★ Schickel); available in both letterboxed and pan-and-scan editions
Just a Gigolo, Lumivision, \$34.95 (Aug. '89, ★★ Hemming)
K-9, MCA, \$34.98 (Dec. '89, ★★★ Sarris)
Lethal Weapon 2, Warner, \$24.98 (March '90, ★★★ Gabler)
Licence to Kill, CBS/Fox, \$49.98 (Feb. '90, ★★ Maltin); letterboxed
Peter Gunn, Vol. 1, Image, \$39.95 (Dec. '89, ★★ Fuerst)
Road House, MGM/UA, \$24.95 (Jan. '90, ★★ Hulse)
Scandal, HBO/Image, \$39.95 (Dec. '89, ★★ Gabler); unrated version
Turner & Hooch, MCA, \$29.99 (March '90, ★★★ Sarris)
Uncle Buck, MCA, \$34.98 (Jan. '90, ★★ Brod)
Weekend at Bernie's, IVE/Image, \$39.95 (Jan. '90, ★★★ Hulse)

NEW AND NOT REVIEWED

Higher and Higher (1943, Frank Sinatra, Michele Morgan, Mel Tormé, Victor Borge, B&W), Image, \$39.95
Joy of Living (1937, Irene Dunne, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Lucille Ball, B&W, Jerome Kern score), Image, \$39.95
The Milky Way (1936, Harold Lloyd, Helen Mack, B&W), Image, \$29.95
Mourning Becomes Electra (1947, Michael Redgrave, Kirk Douglas, Rosalind Russell, B&W), Image, \$49.95

and misses them when they are—admittedly a problem taping jazz improvisations live. Perhaps a few more split-screen shots would have helped, especially during the Kellaway-Jolly duet on "Prelude to a Kiss," where you can't tell whose hands you're watching or even who's playing when!

Musically, however, the program never lags—although *Variations on Ellington Themes* might be a better title than *Echoes*. The arrangements (all credited to Kellaway) are far from traditionally Ellingtonian—in an alternately meditative and hard-driving, contemporary way.

Brazil's bossa nova pioneer Jobim has always been a more interesting composer than a performer, and his *Rio Revisited* is a washout visually. The camerawork is so unimaginative that we don't get individual close-up shots of his female back-up singers until midway in the program and virtually none of the rest of his instrumental quintet (other than superb flutist Danilo Caymmi). Intercutting a few shots of Rio might have been both appropriate for such songs as "Corcovado"—and monotony-relieving. Jobim's songs, of course, remain as infectious as ever—but video is not a plus for them here.

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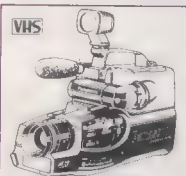
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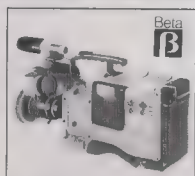
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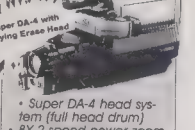


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COMEDY

BLOODHOUNDS OF BROADWAY (1989) Damon Runyon's view of 1920s New York is given the star treatment by Madonna, Matt Dillon, Rutger Hauer, Randy Quaid and Jennifer Grey. Rated PG. (RCA/Columbia tape, Feb. 14, \$89.95)

HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS (1989) The backyard becomes a jungle for four kids accidentally miniaturized by an absent-minded inventor. Rick Moranis is blinded with science. Rated PG. (Touchstone tape, March 16, \$22.99)



Shrunk kids in backyard jungle.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

THE ASSASSIN (1989) A CIA agent (Steve Railsback) battles terrorists and the home team. Rated R. (HBO tape, Feb. 21, \$79.99)

BAIL OUT (1989) Linda Blair swaps prison fatigues for haute couture as an heiress on the run from a drug ring. Rated R. (Vestron tape, Feb. 28, \$89.98)

GHETTO BLASTER (1989) A Vietnam vet turns vigilante to stop a local crime wave. With Richard Hatch, Richard Jaeckel, R.G. Armstrong. Rated R. (Prism, March 8, \$79.95)

THE LAST WARRIOR (1989) On a Pacific island at the end of WWII, a lone GI (Gary Graham of TV's *Alien Nation*) is taken prisoner by a Japanese Marine. Rated R. (SVS tape, Feb. 28, \$79.95)

HORROR

SHADOWZONE (1989) A creature invades people's dreams to become literally the last thing on their minds. With Louise Fletcher. Rated R. (Paramount tape, Feb. 22, no list price)

THE WORST OF FACES OF DEATH (1990) Fans of the macabre will have an R.I.P.-ping good time with this 60-minute compendium of the grisly and the gory from the notorious series. Rated R. (Gorgon tape, Feb. 28, \$39.98)

SCI-FI

THE ABYSS (1989) Keep watching the seas. Deep-sea miner Ed Harris and crew take the plunge with psycho feds and aquatic aliens in this oceanic adventure. Rated PG-13. (CBS/Fox tape, March 15, \$89.98)

THRILLERS

THE DISTURBANCE (1989) Tim Greeson's nocturnal missions through dreamland become frighteningly real—as Lisa Geofreion finds out. Rated R. (VidAmerica, Feb. 28, \$79.98)

TOMORROW NEVER COMES

(1977) Next-day service is not guaranteed when there's hostage suspense at a seaside resort. With Raymond Burr, Susan George, Donald Pleasence, Oliver Reed. Not rated. (Unicorn tape, Feb. 14, \$79.95)

DRAMA

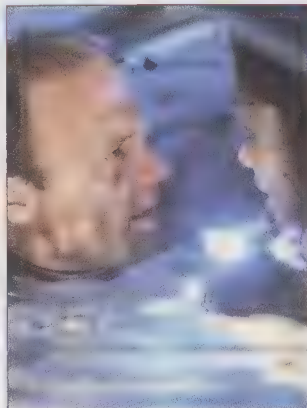
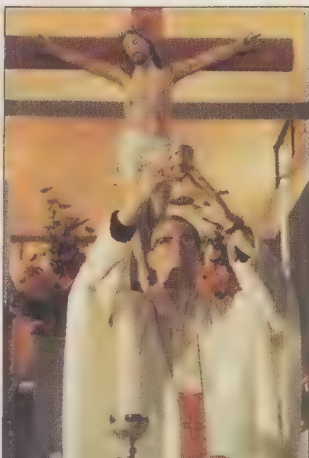
A DOLL'S HOUSE (1973) Claire Bloom plays Ibsen's 19th-century liberated Barbie to Anthony Hopkins' stodgy Ken. With Edith Evans, Ralph Richardson. Not rated. (South Gate tape, March 9, \$69.95)

HEART OF DIXIE (1989) In the land of cotton, turbulent times are not forgotten in this tale of a young woman's political awakening. With Ally Sheedy, Virginia Madsen, Don Michael Paul. Rated PG-13. (Orion tape, March 29, \$89.98)

THE NEON EMPIRE (1989) Organized crime lights up the desert that became Las Vegas. With Ray Sharkey (as Bugsy Siegel), Martin Landau, Gary Busey. Rated R. (Fries tape, March 7, \$89.95)

ROMERO (1989) Raul Julia plays the outspoken Salvadoran archbishop who met a bloody end. Rated PG-13. (Vidmark tape, March 7, \$89.95)

Julia as Romero: desecrated.



Harris afloat in *The Abyss*.

CLASSICS

NORTHWEST PASSAGE (1940) Spencer Tracy stars as the adventurous leader of Rogers' Rangers in colonial America. With Robert Young, Ruth Hussey. (MGM/UA tape, now available, \$29.95)

THE PRISONER OF ZENDA (1937) The swashbuckling Ronald Colman-Madeleine Carroll-Douglas Fairbanks Jr.-David Niven version (the second of five) of the classic adventure. (MGM/UA tape, now available, \$29.95)

SHOCK CORRIDOR (1963) An investigative reporter poses as a mental patient and eventually goes off the deep end. With Peter Breck, Constance Towers. (Criterion Collection CLV disc, now available, \$44.95)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

THE ALMODOVAR COLLECTION (1984-87) Four more offbeat comedies from Pedro Almodovar, the Spanish director of the surprise 1989 hit *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*: 1984's *Dark Habits* (about a troubled singer who seeks refuge in an even more troubled convent), 1985's *What Have I Done to Deserve This!* (about a feminist housewife and her surrealistically perverse family), 1986's *Matador* (an erotic comedy-mystery involving two bullfighters) and 1987's *Law of Desire* (satirizing the dark side of contemporary coupling). Not rated. (Cine-vista tapes, Feb. 14, \$79.95 each)

CHOCOLAT (1989) A woman who grew up amid the racial tensions of French colonial Africa returns after many years. She finds nothing to snicker at. With Mireille Perrier, Cecile Ducasse. Rated PG-13. (Orion tape, March 29, \$79.98)

DOCUMENTARY

ELEPHANT (1989) *National Geographic* packs its trunk for a tour of Kenya and Sri Lanka. (Vestron tape, Feb. 28, \$19.98)

IMAGES OF THE EIGHTIES (1989) Reagan, Gorby, the Ayatollah, Noriega and AIDS are all part of an ABC News retrospective narrated by Peter Jennings. (MPI tape, now available, \$19.98)

THE GREAT QUAKE OF '89

(1989) Diane Sawyer hosts an hour's worth of ABC News footage and followup on the 15 seconds that devastated part of San Francisco last November. Some of the proceeds go to the Red Cross. (Voyager CAV disc, now available, \$49.95)

THE ARTS

MAHLER'S 'RESURRECTION' SYMPHONY AT MASADA (1989) For the finale of Israel's 40th anniversary celebration, Zubin Mehta conducts the Israel Philharmonic in the first large-scale concert ever at Masada, in the Judean desert. (Kultur tape, Feb. 6, \$29.95)

SPORTS

BOB MANN'S COMPLETE AUTOMATIC GOLF (1990) Mann drives through an 80-minute version of his earlier instructions. (Vid-America tape, Feb. 14, \$19.98)

GREAT SPORTS MOMENTS OF THE '80s

(1990) Al Michaels hosts a retrospective of an athletic decade. With John McEnroe, Sugar Ray Leonard, Greg Louganis, Michael Jordan. (CBS/Fox tape, \$19.95, now available)

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SALSAROBICS (1989) It's spicy Latino rhythms for this program of dance and exercise for hot tamales. (Kultur, now available, \$19.95)

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RADON FREE (1989) How to test for and eliminate the second leading cause of lung cancer that's silently killing 20,000 Americans a year. (Xenejex tape, now available, \$24.95)

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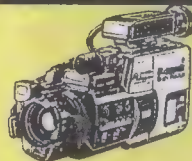
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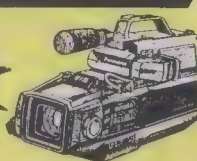


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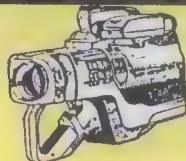
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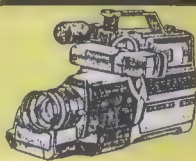
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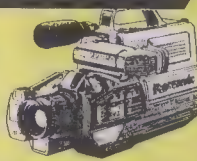


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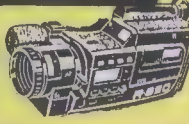


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TEST REPORTS



SUMMARY Zenith Monitor/Receiver, Model SF2799Y

This 27-inch color monitor from Zenith packs a lot into an \$800 set: multiple on-screen menus, parental lockout control and MTS (multichannel television sound) stereo, to name just a few features. In fact, Zenith was one of the companies responsible for developing the MTS audio system that is now standard in the US. (The other company was dbx.) It comes as no surprise, then, that the SF2799Y not only delivered good stereo, as well as SAP (second audio program) sound, but augmented its two-channel reception with an enhanced form of stereo designed to increase apparent separation between the closely spaced speakers inside the set.

Zenith has not ignored video performance, either. Overall, this 27-incher did well in APEL's tests, except for a bit of detectable pincushion distortion (a slight bowing of the image) and overshoot (a slight ringing effect) on transient response tests. Resolution and interlace were superb, however, making for a sharp picture with excellent black level retention. Other high marks went to the set's color quality and lack of overscan. You'll get the whole picture with the SF2799Y.

FEATURES

To call up one of the SF2799Y's five sets of menus you can use either the front-panel controls or the supplied remote. The source menu option allows you to choose among antenna, cable, VCR or the S-connector, which is used for S-VHS, Hi8 and some laser disc players. The picture menu enables you to adjust contrast, black level, color saturation, tint and picture sharpness. The audio menu lets you select stereo and adjust bass, treble and channel balance. A submenu pops up when the stereo option is selected so that you can choose enhanced stereo, SAP or mono. There's also a convenient automatic stereo sound mode that switches between stereo and mono, depending upon the type of signal being received.

The features menu lets you adjust the sleep timer, parental lockout (to block channels you don't want the kids to watch), factory-selected color settings, a comb filter (which reduces picture noise by sacrificing some picture detail) and "master reset" (which returns all the settings to their factory defaults).

Also included is a setup menu that allows

you to choose memorized channels in your area, set the time and date, select a broadcast band (cable or regular broadcast) and an AFC (automatic frequency control) feature for locking onto signals.

The supplied universal remote is programmed by entering certain number codes for your TV, VCR and cable decoder box. An extensive list of brands and models (with the appropriate numbers) are provided in the well-written owner's manual.

CONTROLS

The front-panel controls include an on/off button, channel up/down buttons and menu controls. The remote control has all of these functions as well, in addition to buttons for direct channel access, audio mute, flashback (to return to the previous station) and all the controls to operate a VCR. When a selector switch on the remote is moved to the VCR position, some of the buttons take on other functions appropriate to the program source being viewed.

The back panel at the rear of the TV set is equipped with coaxial connectors for an antenna, a cable TV connection and a loop-



back connection to a cable decoder box. Stereo audio and video input and output jacks are provided, as are fixed and variable audio level outputs. There's also an S-connector and a slide switch that selects internal or external speaker operation.

TEST RESULTS

As one might expect from a monitor/receiver in this class, horizontal and vertical resolution were excellent; APEL's measurements were 560 and 500 lines. (Nowadays, most good monitors exceed the resolution



Fig. 1. Fringe-area reception: excellent.

specs of any source fed into it.) Video frequency response was correspondingly wide, extending to 7.0 MHz. At 85 footlamberts, the set rendered a nice, bright picture.

When properly adjusted, black level

retention was perfect, contributing to sharp, high-contrast pictures. APEL did, however, notice a bit of overshoot and ringing when testing transient response (an imperfection that may be noticed on scenes with a lot of sharp lines, such as those featuring Venetian blinds). There was also a slight pincushion effect on the SF2799Y, but we doubt that most viewers would be able to detect the slight bowing on regular program material.

Color quality on this set was very good, and there wasn't the slightest amount of overscan. The TV tuner section was very sensitive, delivering noise-free pictures even when signal strength was equivalent to fringe-area reception (Fig. 1).

The basic audio circuitry in the Zenith SF2799Y delivered flat response over most of the audible spectrum (40 Hz to 13 KHz). Power output was rather low, however, so if you own a stereo system you should listen to the sound portion of your video programs using an external amplifier and separate speakers. In this configuration, volume and tone controls can still be adjusted using the variable outputs from the TV set so that once you've set the volume to a nominal position on your stereo system, further adjustments can be made via the set's remote control.

Stereo separation of the built-in MTS decoder was practically constant regardless of modulation levels (would that this were true of all the TV MTS decoder sections we've tested). It registered close to the 22 dB mark at midfrequencies. SAP fre-

quency response, though somewhat deficient at the bass end of the spectrum, extended to the practical limits of this service.

APEL's measurements are summarized in the accompanying chart, and we should note that all measurements were made with the color sentry, video (comb) filter and AFC off. Turning on the video filter reduces visible picture noise, but softens the picture slightly. Audio measurements were all made using the fixed audio outputs.

If you're in the market for a 27-inch direct-view monitor/receiver, there are many good reasons for selecting Zenith's SF2799Y, not the least of which is its great price. Add to that all the menu-driven features, the programmable remote, the well-written owner's manual and, well, need we say more?

—Len Feldman

ABOUT THESE TEST REPORTS

Each piece of video equipment we test is a factory-fresh production model—the same quality you would buy in a store. After each product has been tested by APEL—Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory, a leading independent testing facility headed by engineer Frank Barr—it goes to technical editor Len Feldman, an internationally recognized authority with more than 30 years' experience testing home entertainment products. He interprets the data and performs hands-on use tests of each piece of equipment, combining personal, practical experience with the most objective technical data available anywhere.

LAB MEASUREMENTS:

Zenith Monitor/Receiver
Model Number: **SF2799Y**
Serial Number: **991-86381071**

VIDEO SECTION

MAXIMUM USABLE LUMINANCE	85 Footlamberts
RESOLUTION (horizontal/vertical)	560/500 Lines
CONVERGENCE (center/corners)	0/.2%
VIDEO FREQUENCY RESPONSE	7.0 MHz
INTERLACE	50/50
TRANSIENT RESPONSE	Very Good
BLACK LEVEL RETENTION	100%
COLOR QUALITY	Very Good
OVERSCAN	Excellent

AMPLIFIER SECTION

MAXIMUM OUTPUT Audio Output	.50 Volts
TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION (1 kHz, at -10 dB) Audio Output	.10%
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO (A-weighted) Audio Output	61.5 dB
FREQUENCY RESPONSE Audio Output	20 Hz to 18 kHz

AUDIO SECTION

SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO (at 1,000 uV, A-weighted) Stereo (left/right) SAP Mono	59.1/59.2 dB 68.5 dB 57.0 dB
---	---

FREQUENCY RESPONSE (at -20 dB, 100% modulation) Stereo SAP Mono	40 Hz to 13 kHz 70 Hz to 10.5 kHz 38 Hz to 4.5 kHz
--	---

TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION (at 1 kHz, -20 dB) Stereo (left/right) SAP Mono	.29/.27% .45% .22%
--	---

CHANNEL SEPARATION (at 1 kHz, 100%/-20 dB, 100% modulation) Left Channel Right Channel	22.0/22.2 dB 21.0/21.5 dB
--	--

ADDITIONAL DATA

PICTURE SIZE	27 Inches (diag.)
POWER REQUIREMENTS	120 Watts
DIMENSIONS (HxWxD, in inches)	23⁵/₈x26¹/₈x19¹/₂
WEIGHT	NA
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	\$799

All measurements and charts supplied by APEL (Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory).

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TEST REPORTS



SUMMARY

Minolta VHS Camcorder, Model V-11R

Minolta, best known for its still cameras, has not tarnished its image in the least with its past camcorder offerings. The V-11R continues to burnish the company's reputation, with satisfactory performance and a full plate of features at a reasonable price.

In our overall tests, this full-size VHS camcorder measured up to other similar models, making an especially respectable showing in the low-light shooting category with a measured lux rating of 3.2. This is slightly ironic considering that a new feature of this model is the addition of a 10-watt color-enhancement light.

With additional features, such as a flying erase head, minispeaker, time-lapse recording and negative inversion, the V-11R offers most of the features home tapers will find necessary (though it does, unfortunately, lack a manual white balance control, a feature we like to see included, but one that many could do without). Considering that the V-11R is a full-size VHS camcorder, the entire package, at under seven pounds, is relatively light—which your shoulder will thank you for—and it squeezes in at just under \$1,500—which will help keep your wallet a bit heavier.

FEATURES

Besides such now-common features as automatic focus, auto iris and auto white balance, the V-11R incorporates date and time settings that can be added to the start of a recording. Eschewing the current race to get the greatest number of shutter speeds possible, Minolta provides just two speeds, $\frac{1}{500}$ and $\frac{1}{1000}$ of a second, in addition to the standard $\frac{1}{60}$ of a second. Other features include instant review (which replays the last recorded scene), fade-in/fade-out, and an 8:1 power zoom. A flying erase head makes seamless edits possible.

A special effect we've seen added to more home video equipment is also included here: negative inversion. Basically, pushing this button will reverse the colors you're shooting.

The 10-watt camcorder light provides color enhancement, though you won't notice much of an effect on outdoor scenes (unless, of course, you do a lot of shooting at night). Unfortunately, the light only works with the battery and not with the AC adapter. This is a shame since you'll generally want to use the light indoors, where battery-saving wall outlets are the most plentiful.

The tape counter of the V-11R has a rewind memory feature, and the viewfinder display can be set to show the amount of tape remaining. A 10-second self-timer lets you perform your own stand-up routines, and time-lapse recording can be set for intervals from 30 seconds to five minutes. You can operate the feature manually using a still/record button.

Audio offerings include the ability to add your own comments to a tape's soundtrack as you play it back through the camcorder. This can be performed using either the built-in microphone or an external one. Minolta has included an earphone jack so sound levels can be monitored during recording. There's also a small built-in loudspeaker on the side of the V-11R, positioned near your ear when the camcorder is placed on your shoulder.

CONTROLS

Switches and buttons along the left side of the V-11R include controls for shutter speed, time-lapse recording, the self-timer, iris adjustment, negative inversion, fades and instant review. Also located here are a display button (which brings up such information as counter and battery status in the viewfinder) and a clock setting control.

The top of the V-11R contains the main

LAB MEASUREMENTS: Minolta VHS Camcorder Model Number: V-11R Serial Number: 90800018

CAMERA SECTION

MINIMUM ILLUMINATION	3.2 Lux
HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION	325 Lines
COLOR CONTAMINATION	10 IRE
WHITE BALANCE	4 IRE
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chroma, AM	34.4/34.2 dB
Luminance	45.0/33.3 dB
MINIMUM FOCAL DISTANCE	46 inches ($\frac{1}{16}$ inch, macro)
LENS APERTURE	f1.2
ZOOM RATIO	8:1
FOCAL LENGTH	8.7 mm to 70 mm

AUDIO SECTION

MAXIMUM MIKE OUTPUT	.45 Volts
---------------------	-----------

EXTERNAL MIKE SENSITIVITY	2.0 mv
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO	44.7 dB

COMBINED PERFORMANCE

HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION (video/TV output)	250/240 Lines
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chroma, AM (video out)	33.9/34.8 dB
Luminance (video out)	44.8/38.5 dB
Red-Field Chroma, AM (TV out)	33.8/34.2 dB
Luminance (TV out)	35.8/34.5 dB

ADDITIONAL DATA

WEIGHT (including battery and tape)	6 $\frac{3}{4}$ Pounds
DIMENSIONS (HxWxD, in inches)	9 $\frac{1}{4}$ x5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x15 $\frac{1}{2}$
POWER ZOOM SPEED	8 Seconds
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	\$1,440

All measurements and charts supplied by APEL (Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory).

power switch, as well as a camera/VCR selector, audio and video dub buttons, tracking control, earphone jack and all of the transport controls associated with VCR operation. The start/stop recording button and power zoom rocker switch are near the handgrip. The battery/AC adapter mount is on the backside of the camcorder, and the speaker volume control, audio/video input connector and mike mix switch are on the underside.

TEST RESULTS

The V-IIR achieved a low-light rating of 3.2 lux, so you won't necessarily need to use its light indoors. Although the camcorder lacks a manual white balance control, we found the

automatic white balance did just fine, with only 4 IRE of chrominance (color) impinging on shots of neutral objects. Color contamination and purity were acceptable, although APEL found a shift of about 16° toward magenta in the latter measurement. As a result, tapes will appear slightly "hot" with this camcorder.

Horizontal resolution was a very good 325 lines (measured directly from the camera output), but decreased to a middling 250 to 240 lines when measured during playback of a Sony ES-120 tape following a complete record/play cycle. Luminance ratings were somewhat better than average under optimum light conditions, but video noise in-

creased substantially at ambient light levels, hence the advantage of the included light.

In the audio area, external mike sensitivity was notable. In fact, it was good enough to guarantee that virtually any decent-quality microphone (electret or dynamic) will work well with the V-IIR. Though audio signal-to-noise measurements were average, they are typical of what you can expect out of the standard VHS audio track.

Our hands-on tests of Minolta's V-IIR demonstrated that all the camcorder's features worked as advertised. In particular, we liked the time-lapse feature, self-timer and the idea of including a light in the standard camcorder configuration.

— Len Feldman

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TEST REPORTS



SUMMARY

Ricoh 8mm Camcorder, Model R-680

One of the features that has made the 8mm format so popular is its compact size. Ricoh's 8mm R-680 brings the size down even further. A featherweight among camcorders at just 2½ pounds (including battery and tape), the R-680 is touted as the world's smallest camcorder, and that it is—but so is Sony's TR5, Nikon's VN-910 and Kyocera's KD-530. They all use a tape loading system (called "FL" for "flat loading") engineered by Sony to allow for a smaller camcorder. Each model thus bruits its bantam place in the camcorder jungle.

The Ricoh R-680 came out on the low end for minimum illumination (4.3 lux), making it ideally suited for shooting indoor scenes, while its size allows you to take it almost anywhere outdoors. Picture quality was very respectable on this unit, hitting the top end of the conventional 8mm format. We found this especially pleasing given that the recording drum has been shrunk significantly to reduce the size of the camcorder. At \$1,599, the R-680 offers a substantial array of features in a palm-sized package—including a flying erase head for glitch-free edits—making this the ideal camcorder for the amateur TV news reporter or for those who just want to make sure they capture those important—but unexpected—moments in life.

FEATURES

The Ricoh R-680 offers fully automatic white balance, iris adjustment and focus. Its six shutter speeds range from 1/60 to 1/4000 of a second. In order to adjust shutter speed or backlighting, you have to turn off the automatic controls. The 6:1 power zoom can focus down to 1/8 inch in macro.

In addition to the flying erase head, the

R-680 has an edit search feature so you can locate specific scenes during both recording and playback. You can also fade in and out to white and superimpose titles using the camcorder's digital titler, which can memorize one title of your choice. Titles can be played back in one of eight colors.

Filling out the list of features, the R-680 has through-the-lens focusing and an LCD dis-

LAB MEASUREMENTS:
Ricoh 8mm Camcorder
Model Number: **R-680**
Serial Number: **9091776**

CAMERA SECTION

MINIMUM ILLUMINATION	4.3 Lux
HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION	320 Lines
COLOR CONTAMINATION	6 IRE
WHITE BALANCE	7 IRE
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chroma, AM	49.0/44.2 dB
Luminance	42.5/32.8 dB
MINIMUM FOCAL DISTANCE	46 inches (1 1/8 inch, macro)
LENS APERTURE	f2.0
ZOOM RATIO	6:1
FOCAL LENGTH	11mm to 66mm

AUDIO SECTION

MAXIMUM MIKE OUTPUT	.60 Volts
EXTERNAL MIKE SENSITIVITY	4.8 mv
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO	62.7 dB

COMBINED PERFORMANCE

HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION (video/TV output)	260/250 Lines
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chroma, AM (video out)	35.4/44.6 dB
Luminance (video out)	41.4/35.0 dB
Red-Field Chroma, AM (TV out)	36.4/44.1 dB
Luminance (TV out)	38.0/34.6 dB

ADDITIONAL DATA

WEIGHT (including battery and tape)	2½ Pounds
DIMENSIONS (HxWxD, in inches)	4 1/4 x 4 1/4 x 7
POWER ZOOM SPEED	6 Seconds
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	\$1,599

All measurements and charts supplied by APEL
(Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory).

play that shows, among other information, counter readings and the time and date.

CONTROLS

Despite its small size, all of the R-680's controls are easily accessible. The top surface of the tiny camcorder contains the VCR controls. Also found here are the counter reset button and memory switch, power zoom rocker, LCD display, main power button and an edit search switch.

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On the camcorder's right side are the start/stop switch, video and audio inputs and outputs, an external mike jack and a hookup for an RF adapter. The cassette compartment is tucked away here, while the battery and AC adapter plate are stashed on the back.

TEST RESULTS

Aside from its size, the other notable feature of the R-680 was its measured low lux rating of 4.3, which means that you should get a decent picture indoors without an extra light. White balance revealed a relatively low amount of chrominance (color). Color contamination, as measured by APEL, was only 6 IRE—a minimal level—while color purity and saturation were rated as excellent. If anything, the lab's Macbeth color chart revealed an ever-so-slight amount of oversaturation.

Signal-to-noise ratios were excellent overall, with chroma AM (color) measuring an outstanding 49.0 dB under optimum light conditions and remaining at a high of 44.2

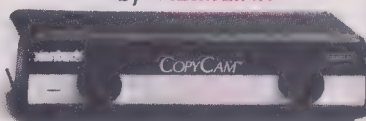
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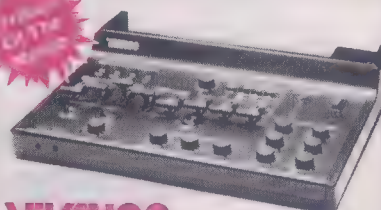
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TEST REPORTS



SUMMARY

Ricoh 8mm Camcorder, Model R-680

One of the features that has made the 8mm format so popular is its compact size. Ricoh's 8mm R-680 brings the size down even further. A featherweight among camcorders at just 2½ pounds (including battery and tape), the R-680 is touted as the world's smallest camcorder, and that it is—but so is Sony's TR5, Nikon's VN-910 and Kyocera's KD-530. They all use a tape loading system (called "FL" for "flat loading") engineered by Sony to

its bantam place in the camcorder market. The Ricoh R-680 came out in 1985, and it is ideally suited for shooting anywhere outdoors. Picture quality is at the end of the conventional 8mm recording drum has been shrunk. At \$1,599, the R-680 offers a lot of features, including a flying erase head, and is the amateur TV news reporter's choice for those important—but unexpect-

FEATURES

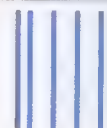
The Ricoh R-680 offers fully automatic white balance, iris adjustment and six shutter speeds range from 1/60 to 1/1000 a second. In order to adjust shutter speed for backlighting, you have to turn off the automatic controls. The 6:1 power zoom focus down to 1/8 inch in macro.

In addition to the flying erase

LAB MEASUREMENTS:
Ricoh 8mm Camcorder
 Model Number: **R-680**
 Serial Number: **9091776**

CAMERA SECTION

MINIMUM ILLUMINATION	4.3 Lux
HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION	320 Lines
COLOR CONTAMINATION	6 IRE
WHITE BALANCE	7 IRE
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chroma, AM	49.0/44.2 dB
Luminance	42.5/32.8 dB
MINIMUM FOCAL DISTANCE	46 inches (1/8 inch, macro)
LENS APERTURE	f2.0
ZOOM RATIO	6:1



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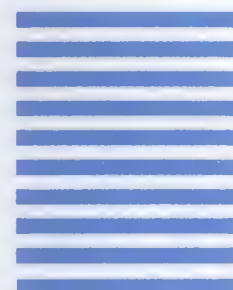
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play that shows, among other information, counter readings and the time and date.

CONTROLS

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TEST RESULTS

Aside from its size, the other notable feature of the R-680 was its measured low lux rating of 4.3, which means that you should get a decent picture indoors without an extra light. White balance revealed a relatively low amount of chrominance (color). Color contamination, as measured by APEL, was only 6 IRE—a minimal level—while color purity and saturation were rated as excellent. If anything, the lab's Macbeth color chart revealed an ever-so-slight amount of oversaturation.

Signal-to-noise ratios were excellent overall, with chroma AM (color) measuring an outstanding 49.0 dB under optimum light conditions and remaining at a high of 44.2 dB, even under minimum illumination.

The resolution measurements were generally better than average for a standard 8mm camcorder. It should be noted, though, that the excellent 320 lines of horizontal resolution measured from the camera section itself, dropped, as was to be expected, to 260 lines coming out of the video output.

On the audio side of things, the AFM recording system used in 8mm gear, though monophonic, provided the benefit of virtually inaudible background noise. This becomes especially apparent when comparing it against VHS or VHS-C systems not equipped with Hi-Fi. External microphone sensitivity was a bit on the low side, requiring 4.8 millivolts of input.

Tests and measurements, however, can not convey the impression this unit makes, managing as it does to pack features usually found in full-size VHS machines into a camcorder that's about the size of a paperback. Not only does Ricoh's R-680 do that, but it delivers as good a picture as its bulkier brethren to boot.

—Len Feldman

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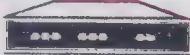
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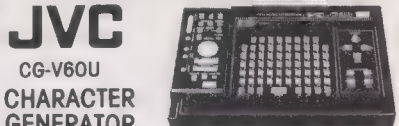
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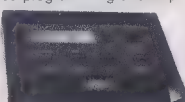
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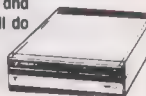
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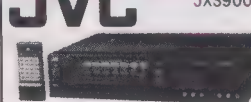
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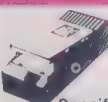
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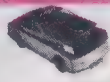
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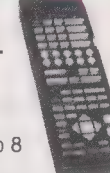


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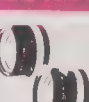
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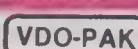
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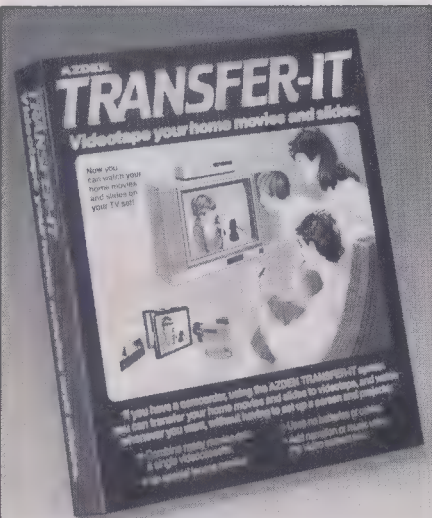
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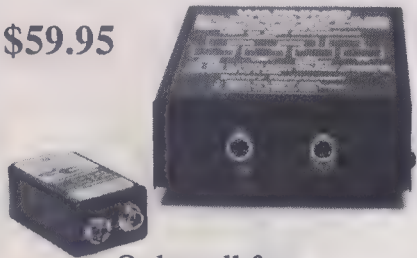
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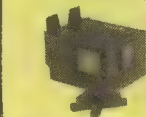
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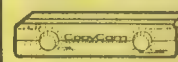
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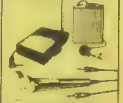
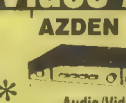
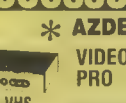
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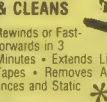
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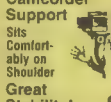
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...SHOOTING HIGH

Continued from page 33

home video by Vestron. Working closely with Rebo's studio, MTV executives expect to produce parts of the channel's performance series *Unplugged* in HDTV and are considering shooting segments of another program, *Buzz*, in high def as well.

Because the current generation of HDTV production equipment makes room for eight channels of CD-quality digital sound, music programming is a major point of entry into the world market for HDTV. This is an area that another New York-area HDTV studio, 1125 Productions/Captain of America, sees as ripe for opportunity.

Founder David Niles, focusing on the sound of HDTV, has formed a venture with record producer Phil Ramone and a third partner to develop long-form music programming. Already, 1125 has finished two classical music videos with Sony-owned CBS Masterworks (now called Sony Classical): one with violinist Itzhak Perlman and pianist Daniel Barenboim playing Brahms sonatas, and the other with violinist Isaac Stern and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Sony will ultimately realize three products from each session—a CD recording, a CD-V (compact disc-video) of downconverted HDTV

material and an HDTV master of the musicians' performances for the label's archives. The HDTV recordings of these performances are a guarantee of longevity in a world which will eventually see a more advanced television system.

The only major network to work in depth with HDTV is CBS, which last spring broadcast *The Littlest Victims*, a TV movie about a doctor who diagnosed AIDS in children. Even though the movie was a drama that required no special effects, people noticed that its video, which started on HDTV, looked different from material produced on standard videotape or 35mm film. "People called up the network," recalls Rupert Stow, who monitored the production for CBS, "not to say how gorgeous the pictures were, but to ask, 'What the bloody hell have you been doing to the commercials? They look awful.'" The experience with *The Littlest Victims* was enough for Stow to change his mind about conventional television. He is now director of information at Niles' 1125 Productions.

Like most pioneers, the founders of these video companies have felt the sting of arrows in their backs—big bills, distrust of new technology and subtle xenophobia toward the Japanese-developed HDTV system. But recently the climate has

changed radically. The Sony-commissioned HDTV productions of the Video Walkman commercial and the classical concerts represent Sony's transition from an HDTV hardware marketer to a software producer as well. Sony's purchase of Columbia Pictures has many speculating that there will be an HDTV feature rolling in Hollywood by next spring. And as the proud new owner of 893 screens at 213 Loews movie theaters nationwide, Sony now has considerable muscle to change not only the way movies are made but how they are seen. One not-so-futuristic scenario for theatrical exhibition would revolutionize both the way movies arrive in theaters and how they're shown once they get there. Proponents of high def think that movies could be mastered to high-definition video and then delivered to theaters nationwide by satellite, where video, rather than film, would be projected. Things are looking up for the pioneers of HDTV. □

Alison Johns is the editor of *Millimeter* magazine.

Reader Poll

Are you ready to go to a theater and watch a high-definition video production instead of a movie made on film? What's your opinion of high-definition television? *Video Review* wants to know. Through our new phone line, we're conducting a reader poll on HDTV. If you'd like to participate, call *Video Review's* Fast Forward phone line. See page 21 for details.

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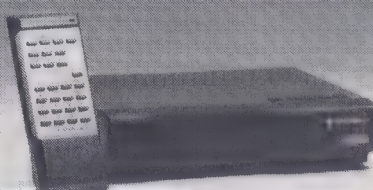
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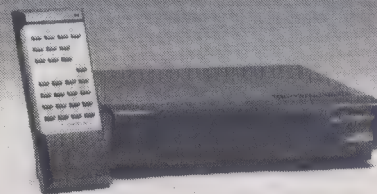
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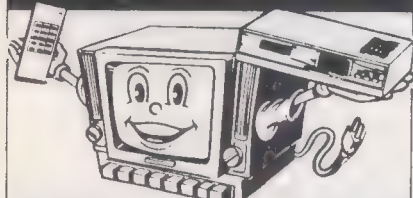
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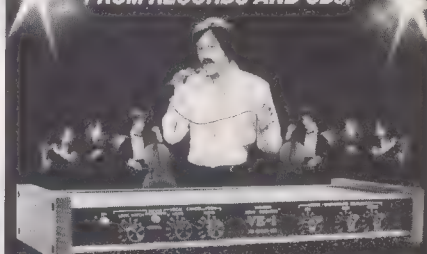
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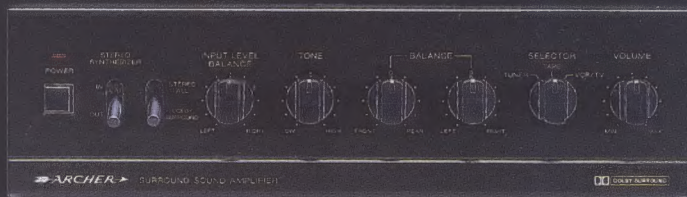
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